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JAPANESE HOUSE-PARTY



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A JAPANESE HOUSE-PARTY

BY

SADI GRANT

AUTHOR OF

"DIAMANELEN," "FOLLY AT CANNES," ETC.

LONDON

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Ernest Goodrich Stillman

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A JAPANESE HOUSE-PARTY

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A JAPANESE HOUSE-PARTY

CHAPTER I

SO LOVE CAME IN

The Imperial Hotel of Tokio is a big modern building, rather out of character with its low-roofed surroundings. It is quite European in its ways and arrangements.

In her private sitting-room on the first floor a young woman was sitting lazily dreaming by the fire, one cold, rainy day in the beginning of April, before the bright Japanese spring weather had properly begun. The fire danced and sparkled brightly, feeling how necessary it was for human comfort on such a disagreeable, damp day. The room was very well fur-

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nished and thickly carpeted—outside in the corridors all sounds usual to a hotel were hushed, and the Viscountess Yone Iyeyasu was as quiet and undisturbed here, in the heart of Tokio, as she would have been in her own country house, half buried in the pine-woods at Karuizawa.

Few things were lying about that belonged exclusively to her, but chief among the few was a large platinotype photograph of a boy in the uniform of the Emperor's Household, in a silver frame. This was Yone Iyeyasu's young son of fifteen, Count Ito Iyeyasu, a good looking boy, who had been appointed a Gentleman-in-waiting on the Emperor about two months before.

Yone Iyeyasu was a widow, the widow of a Japanese diplomat. She was a slight woman, with soft, curly, dark-reddish hair, with a curious charm in her shadow-rimmed blue eyes—a charm that made her beloved by most people who came into contact with

her. She attracted more attention than strictly beautiful women often receive, for she had the attraction of the famous toasts of olden days, of Ninon de l'Enclos and many other world-famous women, the charm of a violet that draws you to its neighbourhood by its hidden sweetness. In the clear pale colouring of her transparent skin, in the eyes that looked out questioningly from their deep-blue depths, there was something of a witch's power. A power, that since the world began, has drawn men to destruction and driven them to distraction, and yet that is only a nameless charm. A nameless something one cannot lay hold of and that can far less be described.

Not that Yone Iyeyasu was universally amiable by any means; she was easily pleased, but if she were not pleased, she did not hesitate to show it; the few people she disliked could not complain that they were kept in the dark on the point. Neither

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did she often take the trouble to make herself what is called agreeable, she only smiled when she felt in the humour to do so, and her usual expression was rather sad than otherwise. Now she sat looking at the fire and thinking of her boy, wondering whether that youth intended to continue spending money at the rate he had done for the last two months, and if so, how long their rather limited income would stand it.

The door of the sitting-room was opened by one of her own men-servants. O'Yone-San looked up expectantly. "Captain Aoki Yamagata," was announced, and a young man of two or three and twenty came into the room.

He was of middle height, with a spare, well-drilled figure and an ugly, good-natured face, made up of contradictory features. His eyes were slightly oblique, and the distance of the eyebrows from them gave them a curious down-dropped expression.

He had a short, well-shaped nose, and a long upper lip, nearly devoid of moustache, which gave an obstinacy to his face that his wide mouth and rather thick lips contradicted. His ears were large, his hair dark, nearly black, with a ripple in it that defied the barber's efforts to entirely shear away. For the rest, his head was small and well set on his broad shoulders, and he looked instinct with vitality. He was a Captain in the 27th Lancers of the Japanese Army; his manners had usually a half contemptuous carelessness of things in general, but just now his curious eyes were wide open and sparkling with eager anticipation, as he came to meet Yone Iyeyasu.

"What luck to find you in!" he said in English, heartily and boyishly. "I hardly dared to hope it!"

He had been at Sandhurst and spoke English like a native, and Viscountess Yone had been at the Japanese Embassy in

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London for three years, so to them both English was as easy to speak as Japanese ; though both, when excited, often relapsed into their native tongue. She, moreover, was half Scotch—her mother was a Scotch-woman.

Yone Iyeyasu shook hands with him ; she, too, was pleased.

“Tea for two, please,” she said to the footman in Japanese, “and bring cake and anything there is. Do you like hot maple cakes?” she said, turning to Captain Yamagata with a little anxious manner that was usual to her.

“I adore them !” he said seriously.

“Hot maple cakes, then,” she added to the footman, “and now, come and sit down here,” she said to the young man, “and tell me why you have come to-day. I was feeling so dull and just hoping somebody would turn up.”

“My mother sent me with a note,” said

Aoki Yamagata, "here it is!" and he took a letter out of his pocket and gave it to the Viscountess; then he went to the fire and poked it up to a brighter blaze.

"A fire is welcome on a wet day," he said, as he carefully arranged a fresh pine-log on the flames."

"I saw you only yesterday at Hama Rikyu," said Yone, as she sat down with the note, unopened, in her hand.

"At the Cherry Blossom party? Yes. Does that mean it is too soon for you to care to see me again?" asked Captain Yamagata curtly.

"No," said Yone, in a half-hesitating manner, "I did not exactly mean that, only—now I think of it, I really have seen you every day lately, have I not?"

"You have," said Captain Yamagata briefly, in a final kind of way. "Don't you think you had better open that letter and read it, O'Yone-San?"

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She coloured slightly and looked at him doubtfully, but Aoki Yamagata's half-shut eyes and close-shut mouth told her little, as he stood partly turned from her, one foot on the fender. Then she opened the note and read it, and gave a little, pleased exclamation.

"You know what is in it, I suppose?" she said to him; "your mother asks me to stay with you for a month at her country house, at Hakoné Lake, in August or September."

Captain Yamagata crossed over to her side, drew a chair close to hers and took the note in his hand and read it.

"Greeting, O'Yone-San.

"We have just concluded the arrangements about going to our Castle of Okodara above Hakone, about which you and I talked together last week. We intend being there through August and September. Both Mr. Yamagata and I hope you will stay with us there for at least a month. Could you

come on or about the 6th of August? Or would September suit you better? Your friend,

“Yamato Yamagata.”

“Well?” said Aoki, turning to her, his face flushing, his eyes well open, and a frank smile on his broad mouth, “You’ll come, won’t you, Yone?”

“I’d like to, very much,” she said, eagerly, “but I am not quite sure, I have half accepted an invitation to stay at my Aunt’s in August.”

“Half acceptances don’t count,” said the young man coolly; “Unless you promise to come to Okodara, I won’t go there at all.”

“But your mother has made her arrangements,” said Yone Iyeyasu impatiently, “It can’t matter so much if I come or not!”

“It does to me,” he said.

“My dear boy!” began Yone, “do not talk nonsense! Here comes tea at last!” she added in a tone of relief, as a jingle of

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tea-cups was heard at the door, and a minute after the footman came in, bringing the tea, and arranged it on a little table at her side. Captain Yamagata waited impatiently while the man did this, and then, going out again, brought in various plates of cake and sweetmeats. The door was scarcely shut finally on the footman, when paying no attention to his hostess's offer of tea, he said :—

“ I came to tell you something about myself, Yone, never mind all that ! ”

Yone Iyeyasu paused with her hand on the blue china teapot.

“ Don't tell me anything, please,” she cried, “ please do not ! ”

“ My grandmother has left me a lot of money,” pursued Captain Yamagata, unmoved.”

Yone heaved a sigh of relief. So this was all ! she had been alarmed for nothing ; and also felt decidedly ashamed of herself for

having expected to be told something totally different. She was tired of speaking English, and continued the conversation in her native language.

"Has she?" she said. "What luck some people have! I'm very glad indeed, though you had lots of money before, hadn't you?"

"An allowance only," said Captain Yamagata, who was the son of the Minister of War; "this is a very different thing!"

"I congratulate you," said Yone enviously, having a vague idea she had heard that the grandmother in question had been very rich indeed. "Dear me, I only wish someone would leave me and Ito Iyeyasu a fortune! I often wonder how we get on at all."

Captain Yamagata looked at her with a passion of devotion in his queer eyes,

"Yone, you must know how I love you," he said. "My only idea when I heard I had got this money was, that now you might be induced to marry me."

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"Aoki Yamagata!" she cried angrily, "what a horrid person you make me out to be!—that I would marry a boy of your age merely because he had had some money left him! Indeed, I would not!"

"I am not a boy!" said Aoki, his face white and drawn with passion and pain. "I love you, Yone, more than my life."

"My dear boy," said Viscountess Iyeyasu nervously, "of course you think you do just now! I can see! I know! Oh, Aoki, don't look like that;—but if you married me, it would be a different thing altogether. I am years older than you!—you would soon hate me!—you would get tired oh me, of! it's impossible! I would never do it!"

She rose from her chair and walked away swiftly to the door. He sprang up too and seized her by both hands, half-way across the room.

"Look at me, O'Yone-San," he cried roughly in Japanese, slightly shaking her,

"it is no boy's love I offer you, but the love of a man, and a strong man. You may be older than I am, though you don't look it; that makes no difference that I can see. You are the one woman on earth I shall ever care for, and I swear, by Buddha, I will have you for my wife."

"I have no choice about it, I suppose," cried Yone Iyeyasu, flushed and half crying. "Aoki, don't—you hurt my hands!—Aoki, *please!*"

He laughed and dropped her hands, then putting one arm round her, he drew her slight figure for one moment against his breast, while he touched her hair with his lips.

"There, go and make me some tea," he said, quickly, "I promise you I will not say anything more. Don't be silly, dearest," he added sternly, "go and make the tea at once."

The Viscountess Yone returned to her

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seat, trying to look dignified, but failing. Captain Yamagata had treated her very badly, she felt; why could she not tell him so, in a proper manner? He was now sitting exactly opposite to her, evidently waiting for his tea.

"Do you take sugar?" she said, in rather a trembling voice.

"I do not," said Aoki Yamagata gravely, and as gravely took the cup of tea from her hands; then he handed her the covered dish of hot maple-cakes and took some himself.

"Captain Yamagata!" she said at last, in a pleading voice.

"Yes?" he said, coldly.

"I can't come to Castle Okodara," she faltered. "I can't come, possibly, Aoki, if you go on like this."

"My darling," said Aoki, still more coldly, "you talk as if I were a policeman, and you a specially charming musmé. I may

have afternoon tea occasionally at Okodara, I suppose."

"You know I don't mean that," she said, half crossly and half laughing. "Do promise me you won't talk about marrying me again, Aoki, won't you?" she said pleadingly. "I would so like to go there, and I really cannot if you do."

He made no answer, and she went on:—

"It really is absurd, you know, Captain Yamagata; in a few years I shall be quite an old person—and fat, too, very likely," she added, hopefully, "and then you will be quite thankful to me for not having married you."

"Perhaps so!" said Aoki Yamagata; "the future is ever shrouded from our eyes."

"I do not believe you really mean it at all," she added quickly, as he looked at her stolidly and then took some more maple-cake; "promise me you won't talk about

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all this again, Aoki, please. I do like you so much—and I could go out with you shooting and fishing and have such a nice time up there. I would so enjoy it, if only——only——”

“I do not intend to worry you, if that is what you mean,” said Captain Yamagata, stiffly.

“Perhaps you would rather I did not come to Okodara now?” faltered Yone, suddenly remembering it is not usual to refuse a man and then stay in his father’s house, even in Japan, for a month immediately after.

“Listen to me, O’Yone-San,” said Yamagata, speaking earnestly and quietly, though his lips were white and his eyes blazing. “You like me as a friend, you say. As a friend you must come to Castle Okodara and I will do all I can to make you forget this afternoon.”

“Oh, Aoki, I am so sorry!” she cried,

“you don’t know how I like you—you are the dearest boy I ever saw. Please, please don’t be angry with me!”

Aoki Yamagata took her little hand in his and raised it to his lips.

“It’s all right, darling!” he said, “I quite understand. Well, then, that’s settled!” he added, briskly. “Just go and write a note to my mother, dearest, saying you will come on the 6th for a month, and I will travel down with you and look after you.”

Yone Iyeyasu got up.

“Am I to tell Mrs. Yamagata that also?” she said, laughing. “Besides I am not at all sure I can go on the 6th. Aunt Isé most especially wants me on the 4th—”

“Nonsense!” said Captain Yamagata, impatiently; “go and write the note at once, Yone, or I shall be late for dinner.”

The Viscountess crossed the room and sat before the writing table.

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"You order me about in a very odd way, Captain Yamagata," she said, severely.

"Do I?" he said, coming up and leaning on the back of her chair; "now write, 'Greeting, Yamato Yamagata'—"

"Yes, you do," said Yone, in desperation; "how can I possibly write anything, Captain Yamagata, with you looking over my shoulder? Please go away—please!"

Her voice faltered again and Aoki Yamagata walked away to the other end of the room and remained there for some minutes. Then he took out his watch and remarked—

"It's nearly seven o'clock, dearest, you can end it up now, I'm sure. You've only got to say 'all right.'"

"What a polite way that would be of answering an invitation!" said Yone, as she fastened up her letter and held it out for him to take. He stood at attention by the side of the writing-table, with the note in his hand.

"I have to go back to Kobe to-morrow," he said.

"Have you? It is really good-bye then?" said Yone, almost joyfully, with a guilty sense of relief; then she added nervously, "Aoki, when you see me again, do not keep on calling me 'darling,' will you? It—it—people will think it so odd."

"I will remember," he said stiffly. Good-bye, O'Yone-San, Don't ring, I can get out by myself."

A minute later and he was gone. Yone Iyeyasu pushed her hair from her forehead and sighed, and then laughed.

"He is a dear boy," she said to herself, "but it would be absurd—ridiculous—for me to marry him. I could not think of it, nothing makes a woman look so ancient as marrying a man young enough to be her son—and—yet! he is a dear boy and very rich, I suppose; I heard old Baroness Kumatsu had more than twenty thousand

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yen a year from coals, or something like that, and now I daresay Aoki has it all. Still, marrying him is out of the question, quite—of course."

"She got up, and walked restlessly about the room, thinking.

"I wonder why I am so afraid of Aoki Yamagata, when he looks as he did to-day? I seem not to be able to help obeying him, which shows how stupid and weak-minded I am. However, I will not obey him when I am at Castle Okodara, I am determined. It will be truly delightful staying there. I must invent some excuse for not going to Aunt Isé's and I must find out exactly when Ito can get leave and who he wants me to ask later on to Matura. Aoki Yamagata, of course, for one—Ito always wants him. Oh, dear! why ever should Aoki want to make love to me? He has known me a whole year and we have always been such good friends till now! Now he has spoilt it all!"

She sat down and rang the bell, and ordered more tea. She must have something hot and strong to restore her nerves before dressing for dinner; she had promised to dine at the French Embassy. She drank the tea when it came and ate a plateful of peppermint cakes—then she felt better.

She dressed and went out to dinner, and was taken down by a well-known staff officer. Then after dinner she played bridge till two in the morning—for 2 yen a hundred only—and went home tired out, but a pleased, if a modest winner, to her Hotel.

CHAPTER II

ABOVE LAKE HAKONÉ

Yone Iyeyasu was the daughter of Baron Hayashi, a member of the Japanese Diplomatic service, and head of one of the most ancient families in Japan. When Japanese Ambassador in England, he had met and after a short courtship, married, the daughter of a poor Scotch baronet, Sir William Mc. Gregor. From her mother's side of the family Yone inherited her red hair, an unusual colour in Japan. Her father was a great advocate of progress and of the adoption of European ways in his own country, so Yone was brought up in the same manner as an English girl of her age. But Baron Hayashi followed his country's way in arranging his daughter's marriage, and

disposed of her at the age of fourteen to the Viscount Iyeyasu, a man about thirty years her senior. Viscount Iyeyasu was a direct descendent of the great Marshal Iyeyasu, who founded the Tokugawa Shogunate, which lasted down to our own day, when the present Emperor took the ruling of his dominions into his own hands. Viscount Iyeyasu was himself a Daimyo of the purest blood and most exalted ideals, but this did not prevent his being a very unpleasant person to live with. After seven years of marriage he died, and went over to Meido, the Great Shadowland.

As the mother of his only son, Yone Iyeyasu had still a very important position. She managed the affairs of her son's not inconsiderable property, from which a fair income was secured to herself, so long as she did not remarry. In the old days of Japan, the wife of a Shogun or Daimyo was obliged to become a nun on her husband's

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death and spent her time in praying for his soul. There are still nunneries attached to some of the temples. One is at Genkoji, in Karuizawa. But Yone Iyeyasu was far too modern and European in her ideas to do this; she was proud of the ancient Daimyos and their traditions, but never thought of carrying them out in her own person. Still, since her husband's death she had lived a secluded life in the quaint-roofed, straggling castle of the Iyeyasu family and devoted herself to the care and education of her boy. He had had an English as well as a Japanese tutor at home, and for the last year had been finishing his education in the Nobles' College in Tokio. People are supposed to be grown up much sooner in Japan than in England: at fifteen Count Ito Iyeyasu's education was completed and he was given a post in the Emperor's Household. In order to be near her son, Yone Iyeyasu had come down from her country seat to the

Hotel at Tokio and for four months had mixed a great deal in society there. The Minister of War and his wife had, among many others, seen a great deal of her. The Empress of Japan had commanded her presence at all Court functions. The winter had been bitterly cold, but in the steam-heated, glass-lined corridors of the Imperial Palace at Tokio the weather out-of-doors made little impression. Most of the great nobles of Japan had copied the Palace and introduced every kind of modern comfort into their ancient strongholds. The castle of Okodara was a good example of this; except for the magnificence of the gold-lacquered doors and the exquisite colouring of the rich Kyoto silks which were used as coverings for the furniture and were laid on some of the walls, one might have imagined oneself in a country house in Scotland. Okodara stood on the beautifully-wooded hill, overlooking Lake Hakoné and the

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Emperor's Summer Palace, on an island in the Lake. Facing the Castle, across the Lake, rose the snow-tipped cone of Fujiyama, the sacred mountain. In order to get to Okodara from Tokio, Yone Iyeyasu had to leave the railway at Kodzu. Here Mr. Yamagata's carriage was waiting and she drove along a fairly good road for five or six miles to Yumoto. A tram for ordinary passengers runs along this road and by this her boxes and her maid went to Yumoto. Here they had to be loaded on to rickshas and dragged up the steep, narrow path that leads up to Miyanoshita by the side of the river Hayagawa. The carriage itself drove on by a much longer and winding way round the Hills, and through the woods to the Castle of Okodara.

It was now the end of August, so nearly four months had elapsed since we saw the Viscountess Iyeyasu in Tokio. The weather had been very hot and she had spent most

of the summer near the pretty seaside town of Atami, where the Italian Minister had built a beautiful house, partly of stone and partly of wood, out of deference to the earth-quaky tendencies of Japan.

At Okodara, Yone Iyeyasu found quite a large party assembled: when she arrived, they were all having tea in the great hall, hung with Daimyo's swords and great bows and arrows. That is, with the exception of Aoki Yamagata, who had travelled from Tokio with her.

Mrs. Yamagata was a rather stout, dark-complexioned lady, about fifty years of age, who thought her son Aoki a type of all that was perfect on earth. There was one daughter, O'Sudzu, a pleasant girl of fourteen, and one smaller boy, Niko, twelve years old, with a well-developed faculty for making the most inconvenient remarks at the most unsuitable times.

The house-party consisted of a Mr. and

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Mrs. Bentinck, their three daughters and one son, Americans, travelling in Japan, a Count and Countess Goto, old friends of Mr. Yamagata, a Baroness Yseulte, whose acquaintance Mrs. Yamagata had made in Rome two winters before. The Baroness was the widow of a French diplomatist, and had kept the manners and adopted most of the exaggerated language of her adopted country, though she was really English herself. There was also a pretty Miss Conyngsby, a niece of a big banker in Tokio, not very young, and who was firmly bent on securing to herself, if possible, the eldest son of the family and his large fortune; a Mr. Furikata, a barrister, a dry and unemotional man, with observant black eyes, a conceited Captain Clarke, in the Engineers, seconded for duty in Japan, and two of Aoki Yamagata's brother officers in the 27th Lancers, Count Saigo and Mr. Munékito. All the men liked Yone Iyeyasu,

from old Mr. Yamagata, who really was not old at all, to Santo Munékito, who declared himself at once her slave. When she had been at Okodara a week she felt as if she had known the Yamagatas all her life, and most of the house-party as well. She was always beautifully dressed, and suitably, which is really a matter of greater importance, and she was always ready for any amusement that was proposed.

Castle Okodara was a very large, rambling building, all turrets and queer little stairs and unexpected rooms; it was very large, with more than thirty bedrooms.

In the great dining-room, the whole party were just finishing lunch, the mid-day meal, which they called lunch in English fashion. It was a pouring wet day, and they were discussing what they could do to amuse themselves on such a hopeless afternoon.

"I had arranged to drive some of you to Marquis Karashi's house," Mrs. Yamagata

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began, "I so wished you to see O'Chiyé-San, the Marquis's elder sister, who manages his house for him."

"Is the name of Marquis Karashi's country place, Shira Hata?" asked Mrs. Bentinck, who was sitting near her hostess.

"Yes, Shira Hata," said Mrs. Yamagata; "it is a big place, with an almost hermit for its master, though I must say the Marquis has come out of his shell lately, he has been here several times."

"A dear old man!" said Miss Conyngsby, gushingly.

"I certainly should not call Marquis Karashi old," said Mrs. Yamagata, annoyed, "he can scarcely be forty-five."

"Oh! isn't he?" said Miss Conyngsby, childishly, "I thought he was ever—ever so much more than that, didn't you, Captain Yamagata?" addressing the son of the house, who was sitting next to her at lunch.

"I never thought about it," he said,

shortly; "but of course the Marquis is not old.

'O'Yone-San," he continued, across the table, "I want to show you my collection of butterflies this afternoon—will you come with me to see them?"

"I?—oh, yes!" said Yone, at once. "But I don't know anything whatever about butterflies, I am afraid."

"I didn't know you had any butterflies, Aoki," said Niko; "where are they? Where did you get them?"

Aoki Yamagata ignored his brother's questions, but Miss Conyngsby said with a tender, upward glance—"Do, do show them to me, Captain Yamagata—I am so fond of butterflies."

"I will—some day," said Aoki, unmoved.

"But to-day is so wet!" she continued, artlessly; "do show them to me to-day. I don't think really the Viscountess cares about seeing them, I heard her arrangin

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something with Mr. Furikata just before lunch, about what they would do in the afternoon."

Aoki's eyes flashed unpleasantly.

"May I get you anything more, Miss Conynsby?" he said, shortly. "No?—then I think we may as well go." He pushed back his chair from the table and walked round to where Yone Iyeyasu was sitting, Mr. Furikata by her side.

"May I get you a peach?" said Aoki, over the back of her chair. He said it almost savagely, and Mr. Furikata grinned, an unsympathetic grin, as he heard him.

Yone Iyeyasu flushed slightly and turned round.

"No, thank you," she said, gently, "I have quite finished lunch. How rude of you, Captain Yamagata, to leave Miss Conynsby like that!—how cross she looks, do go back."

At the same time she also got up from

the table. Everybody had finished and some of the people had gone to the window, to look out at the driving rain and discuss the chances of the weather clearing up. Some people called Flott, staying at Fujiya's Hotel, at Miyanoshita, had come over to lunch in rickshas, and wondered how they would get back there. Colonel Flott was a militia Colonel, fat and podgy. He and his father had made a large fortune in some patent food, and now Colonel Flott patronised, or tried to patronise, the foreign countries he condescended to visit. He considered the Japanese a nation of savages, and by no means kept this opinion to himself. He made personal remarks loudly, and was generally hated and cold-shouldered. But he had good introductions, and was invited to some of the most important houses in Japan. Also he never saw he was snubbed, and indeed would have thought such an attempt impossible. Snub Colonel

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Flott, indeed! When the object to be snubbed is like a well-fed pig to look at, and has the comprehension of a rhinoceros, the thing is impossible. His daughter, Miss Alexandra Flott, was very different in appearance, but equally self-admiring. She wore the neatest of tweed skirts; the most shining gold bands, and chains jingled all over her. Her skirts were very short but well made, and she was careful to inform the company wherever she went that she only wore tweeds and stuffs manufactured by the Scotch Industries.

"In our position," she would say modestly, "it is so important we should uphold the interests of our people." They had taken a place in Aberdeenshire for a term of years.

"What does she mean by that?" had said a young Macleod, irreverently, "does she mean old Flott is really a pig, and she must assist his relations in the cabins and cottages?" But Alexandra Flott meant

something very different to this.

"Will you come with me now, O'Yone-San?" said Aoki, trying to speak in an ordinary tone.

"To see the butterflies, yes, where are they?" said Yone, as she followed him out of the room.

"In my own sitting-room in the west tower," said Aoki, turning to her in the hall. "Hush, darling, please! I don't want the whole lot to come after us." When with her alone, he usually spoke in Japanese.

Yone Iyeyasu followed him in silence, out of the hall, down a long passage, where he took her hand, up another flight of stairs, down the corridor and round several corners, till he paused in front of a big, nail-studded door, on the right hand side. Here he stopped and taking a key out of his pocket, he unlocked and opened it, let her pass into the room and then came in himself, locking the door again on the inside. Yone did not

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notice he had relocked the door, for she had gone far into the room, a square turret-chamber, with one huge stone-mullioned window, looking out over a stretch of wooded land and bounded by violet hills in the distance.

"How lovely it is!" she said, turning to him, "what a nice room to take for your own. Quite the nicest I have seen in the house!"

Aoki made no answer, but coming up to her he took her in his arms, without further delay.

"At last, my darling!" he said, covering her face with kisses.

Yone Iyeyasu gasped, and disentangled herself as well as she could.

"Oh, Aoki," she cried, "What are you doing? How wrong of you to bring me up here for this!"

Aoki laughed, coolly, and put his arms round her again, drawing her down beside himself on to the cushioned window-seat.

"I can stand this sort of thing no longer, Yone," he said. "For a whole week I have scarcely been able to get a word with you, and have had to stand by and see that ape, Furikata, and the Marquis Karashi making love to you, and I swear I will stand it no longer. It is now nearly three o'clock, and from now till five you will stay here with me alone."

"Till five, Aoki?" cried Yone, in dismay.

"Is it such a dreadful prospect, darling?" said Aoki, kissing her gently. "I'm sure we can amuse ourselves very well without the society of Miss Flott and even of Julia Conynsby."

Yone Iyeyasu laughed. "Well, if I do stay here, Captain Yamagata, you must be more sensible. Please remember," she added, a little crossly, "I have never promised to marry you, and I do not think I intend to."

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Aoki simply laughed and held her closer, as he said: "But you love me, you know you do, O'Yone-San, only you are too shy to own it. Lift up your blue eyes and look at me!" He lifted her chin with one hand, tilting her flowerlike face till he saw straight into the shadowy, frightened depths of her eyes. What he saw there seemed to please him, for he kissed her still more gently, and took her more completely in his arms.

Yone disengaged herself rather proudly.

"Do not, Aoki," she said. "I must go down at once. I like you immensely, but I will not marry anyone just yet."

However, he was young and strong, wilful and masterful—at least she was quite incapable of defying him.

Suddenly they heard voices and steps in the passage outside, and Yone moved away quickly. She did not know the door was locked, and imagined the invaders were coming in.

Captain Yamagata said "Locked!" in a low voice and held her fast: while she stood clutching the lappel of his coat in her hand. He thought he had never seen her look so pretty, like a startled deer, and he bent his head and kissed her again.

She scarcely noticed what he did, she was so occupied in listening to the sounds outside.

"Oh, Aoki, what shall we do?" she said, under her breath.

He laughed and listened. There were evidently two or three people in the passage, opening the doors as they came along; practically all the rooms up here were unoccupied, as they were in the roof and considered rather damp. The listeners heard Miss Conynsby's would-be childish treble, and Santo Munékito's loud laugh, and Niko Yamagata's voice, with an anxious note in it. He was talking now—he had a wholesome dread of his elder brother, and

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knew how furious Aoki would be, if he were disturbed in the room he had made his own.

"I tell you there's nothing to see up here," Niko said, angrily; "for goodness sake come down, Miss Conyngsby."

"No, indeed!" she said, in a delightfully frisky manner. "I really can't come away till I have discovered everything possible in this too delightful old house. What is this large door on the right? It looks quite important! Lots of nails all over it."

"That's the door of Aoki's own room," Niko said, in a disgusted way; "he never lets anyone into it—it's locked."

Miss Conyngsby gaily tried the door.

"So it is!" she cried. "What a pity! I daresay he keeps his butterflies in there!"

"Very likely," said Lt. Santo, and roared with laughter.

Niko got still more angry.

"All I know is this," he said, "if Aoki is in there now, and hears us all outside his

door, he'll be simply furious! As if it were my fault!" continued Niko, in an injured tone. "It was'nt me who brought you here—you insisted on coming, and now I'm going off downstairs, whether you two come or not."

"You're a very rude boy," said Miss Conynsby, angrily, "your brother said himself that he would show me his butterflies."

"Well! if he wants to do so, he can," said Niko, going away. "All I know is, I won't try to find the key of the door, and I'll tell Aoki you tried your level best to get into his room."

Then Yone Iyeyasu heard them all go away, Miss Conynsby talking and laughing very loudly to cover her defeat.

"You heard them, Aoki?" cried Yone. "That horrid girl is sure to say I was locked in here with you!"

"Let her say what she likes!" said Aoki.

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"Oh, Aoki, please, please open the door and let me go," she cried, her blue eyes swimming in tears.

Aoki got up and again Yone felt the chill of unreasoning fear, as she had done on that day in Tokio. Was this man too strong for her to contend with?

His face was transfigured with passion, and he seized her roughly in his strong young arms.

"By the gods!" I will not let you go!" he cried, "you shall play with me no longer, O'Yone-San; you are mine and mine only, and I will never let you go—Here you shall stay with me till five o'clock, if all the fools in the house come and stand outside. At least you shall settle something definitely—I swear you shall not put me off any longer."

Tea-time came and went, and their absence was remarked in the big hall where the custom was to have five o'clock tea; but Aoki was the son of the house, and

also his great fortune cast a kind of halo round him in the eyes of his family—nobody cared to interfere with Aoki or make remarks on Aoki's doings. Mrs. Yamagata felt vaguely uncomfortable when time passed on, and Yone Iyeyasu also failed to appear.

“But, after all, young people must be young people!” she philosophised comfortably, “and Yone is not a young girl, she can look after herself—they may not even be together, or she may be having tea in her own room.”

The other ladies were not so charitable in their thoughts.

“Isn't it extraordinary?” Miss Conynsby said to O'Sudzu Yamagata in her most childish way, “your brother and Viscountess Iyeyasu have been alone together for three whole hours, ever since lunch.”

“However can you know that?” said O'Sudzu-San, opening her eyes. “Aoki never says what he is going to do, and he often

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does not come in for tea. Very likely he is out-of-doors."

Julia Conyngsby moved contemptuously, in an impatient manner. Could senseless belief in a brother go so far as this? She would waste no more words on such a fool as O'Sudzu-San.

In the Tower Room Yone Iyeyasu sat on a low sofa, her face mutinous and much more temper apparent in her manner than love.

"You ask impossibilities, Aoki," she said, impatiently. "Why should I do such an absurd thing as consent to an immediate marriage? I do not mean to do so."

"You mean, then, to keep on worrying me as you do now?" said Aoki, angrily. "Look here, O'Yone-San, if you are going to marry me, why not do as I ask? Let it be as I wish—I will make all the arrangements, you will have no trouble at all. Let me have my heart's desire, Yone," he added, more gently.

She hesitated, and he saw it and seized his opportunity. He came and sat down by her on the sofa.

"Do as I wish, O'Yone-San," he said, with a complete change of tone and manner, not without its effect.

"Ito will not like it at all," said Yone.

"If you told him beforehand, he might make some objections," said Aoki, coolly; "but once we are married, Ito will be pleased enough. And Baron Hayashi will be glad to be saved all trouble," added the young amateur diplomatist.

Yone sighed; this was only too true. Baron Hayashi did not care about being troubled by his family, and her mother, her sweet Scotch mother, had died long ago.

"I will think—I will tell you to-morrow," she said, nervously. "You tease me so, Aoki, I have a bad headache. Let me go now."

Aoki looked at his watch.

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"By Shinto! it's half-past five o'clock," he said, as he stood up; then he took her hands in his and said: "Have I won?"

"Oh yes, I suppose so," said Yone; "don't say any more now, Aoki, let us go. I am so worried, you make me say what you like. To-morrow I will be sorry."

"You cannot draw back again," said Captain Yamagata, in a satisfied manner. "I'm awfully sorry if you have a headache, darling—go to your room and I'll send up some tea at once—I had no idea it was so late."

The room was still full of the rays of the setting sun, but outside the door it was nearly dark. They went together down the stairs and through the dim passages, till they reached the door of her own room.

"I will send you up some tea, dearest," he said. "That infernal girl!" he added fervently, as he saw the ubiquitous Miss Conynsby coming towards them down the

passage; there was a light at the further end and she must have seen them both quite distinctly.

Yone Iyeyasu went into her room and shut the door, and Captain Yamagata continued his way unconcernedly.

Miss Conyngsby gave a well-studied start of surprise as he approached her.

"Dear me, Captain Yamagata," she exclaimed, "we were all just wondering where you were, and why you did not come to tea!"

"Have you not left some crumbs for me, then?" said Aoki. "You had better come downstairs with me again and look."

Miss Conyngsby turned and went with him, talking gaily on the way. No doubt his conduct with Viscountess Iyeyasu was very questionable; but, after all, one can put up with very odd things indeed when they are committed by a truly eligible young man.

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Yone Iyeyasu heard them talking on the stairs as she stood in her room.

"How can he talk and laugh? ' she cried, passionately. Tea!—tea!—as if I could bear the sight of tea!" and she flung herself down by the fire, which was always lighted in her room at five o'clock, however warm the weather might be, for her to dress by, for dinner. Yet, when presently a neat little tray was brought up by her maid—"With Mrs. Yamagata's love, and so sorry O'Yone-San had a headache!"—she did not despise it; tea is ever a great consoler.

Aoki Yamagata had gone down to the hall and asked his mother simply to send some tea to Yone Iyeyasu's room, as she had a headache and did not care to come down.

"Shall I go to her?" cried O'Sudzu, starting up.

"I think she would rather be left alone," said Aoki. "She really has a bad head-

ache, and you know, in Tokio, she always liked to be left alone, when those headaches came on. Just see she has a nice tea, that's all."

Aoki Yamagata stayed in the hall for some time, and made himself more agreeable to his mother's guests than he often took the trouble to do. He did not see Yone again till dinner time, and then he scarcely glanced at her as she came late into the drawing-room, dressed in white satin and looking very fragile, a brilliant colour in her usually pale cheeks and her blue eyes shining with excitement.

"Great Heaven, how lovely she is!" murmured Santo Munékito.

"We women are all to choose our dinner companions to-night," said Mrs. Yamagata to the company at large. "Who will you choose, O'Yone-San?"

"Santo Munékito," said Yone, laughing, "come here at once."

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"I choose Captain Yamagata," said Miss Conynsby, with a charming shyness, and Aoki came forward with a far from flattering expression on his face.

"Look here, Santo," he said in a low tone in Japanese, as he passed that young man, "Viscountess Iyeyasu has got a headache; you'll bother her with your rubbishy talk to-night—change with me."

"Not if I know it!" said Mr. Santo, decidedly—"I've had piece of luck for once, and I'm not such a fool as to chuck it away—thank you all the same, my boy!" By which you may see human nature is much the same in Japan as it is in the countries further West.

All through dinner O'Yone-San managed to talk in much the same manner as usual though she often answered Mr. Munékito at random and at times the table seemed to swim round her, and she could scarcely distinguish the people opposite to her. But

at last dinner was over, and with a sigh of relief she found her way alone to a dark corner of the drawing-room, behind some curtains hung in an archway. Here she sat down and buried her face in her hands at once, hoping she was quite unnoticed. But Mrs. Yamagata had felt uneasy about her all through the evening, and had now followed her to this corner of the big room.

“Dear Yone! I am sure you are ill!” she said, in her kind voice; “do let me get you something, or let me do something for you.”

“No—yes—I mean,” faltered poor Yone. “My head aches very badly.”

“Do go to bed, dear!” said kindly Mrs. Yamagata. “I feel sure you are not fit to stay up any longer. Let me send you some nice, hot wine-negus to your room, it is an excellent thing for a bad headache. You really must go to bed at once—you look quite worn out.”

“Thank you, you are most kind,” said

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Yone, faintly. "I think I will go to bed, if you are sure you don't mind."

"Mind? Of course not!" said her good-natured hostess. "Go at once, my dear, and I will tell the housekeeper to see about the negus myself, you will find it a capital remedy."

So Yone Iyeyasu went thankfully to bed, utterly worn out, and she drank the negus humbly when it arrived in her room, though as a rule she hated anything of the kind.

Aoki Yamagata heard his mother say, as he entered the drawing-room, that O'Yone-San was not feeling well, and so had gone to bed.

"She looks to me extremely feverish," pursued Mrs. Yamagata, comfortably, to fat, old Countess Goto. "I hope it will not turn out to be influenza—it is such a dreadfully catching thing to begin in a house and usually goes all through it, taking everybody in turn. Yone Iyeyasu is a charming young woman, and I should be very much put out if she

became seriously ill. I must say I do not like the looks of her to-night."

"A good sleep will do her a world of good, no doubt," said Countess Goto, who only wasted sympathy on her own ailments and had none to spare for those of other people; "these young society-women exert themselves far too much!"

"O'Yone-San gone to bed!" cried Lt. Santo disconsolately. "Why, she was as happy as possible at dinner!"

"Let us hope she will quite have recovered by to-morrow," said Mr. Yamagata the elder; "we cannot get on without O'Yone-San, eh, Aoki? All you young men would be lost without O'Yone-San!" and he chuckled comfortably to himself.

Aoki alone said nothing, but he felt as if he could cheerfully and willingly have slain them all, excepting his mother.

He went up to that matron presently and said in a low voice:—

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"O'Yone-San isn't really ill, is she, Mother?"

"Nothing of any seriousness is the matter, I hope, my dear son," she answered. "If she feels worse to-morrow I will send for the doctor from Tokio."

"Couldn't you do something for her to-night?" said Aoki; "surely she ought not to be left to herself!"

"She has a good maid, dear," replied his mother, "and also I have told Matsuda, the housekeeper, to send her up some hot wine, an excellent thing for a chill. I trust she will be much better by to-morrow."

"You will see about her yourself?" pursued Aoki, anxiously.

"I will, dear," she replied. "I will see she is properly attended to; do not be afraid."

"Dear boy, what a kind heart he has!" thought Mrs. Yamagata, quite unaware of how severely the immaculate Aoki's conscience was disturbing him.

“Thank you, Mother, please do,” said Aoki, as he walked away. He felt very uncomfortable and rather unhappy; he feared O’Yone-San might be seriously ill, and he he spent the night thinking how he could put matters on a right footing for himself and for her. Aoki’s decisions were usually of a sledge-hammer description.

CHAPTER III

RESOLUTIONS.

Captain Yamagata came down early to breakfast the next morning. He had felt inclined to knock at Yone Iyeyasu's door and ask how she was himself, but her room was one of the principal bedrooms in the Castle, in the corridor at the top of the great staircase, and so many other bedrooms opened on to the same wide passage that he knew he could not go to her door without being seen by other people. He did not like the idea of sending her a note, and so putting himself at the mercy of the servants.

He went down to the breakfast-room before anybody else, but soon the rest of the party came in by degrees, till they were

nearly all there—excepting Yone herself—she was not there. Countess Goto asked Mrs. Yamagata how the invalid of the previous night felt this morning.

“She is not equal to coming down to breakfast, I fear?” said Mrs. Yamagata. “I sent my maid to her room quite early, to ask how she was.”

Lazy people often absented themselves from breakfast at Castle Okodara, and the fact of Yone’s choosing to stay upstairs caused little remark.

Aoki Yamagata left the dining-room, as soon as he thought everybody had come down to breakfast. He could wait no longer—he strode upstairs, and then his firm step echoed down the corridor till it stopped at Yone Iyeyasu’s door. He knocked, and the maid opened it.

“Here, Margaret;” he said shortly, to the middle-aged Scotch maid, giving her at the same time two silver yen, “I must

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speak to your mistress for a moment ; stay by the door and see no one comes near." Then he passed her quickly and went down the long room, to the side of the white-and-gold bedstead.

Yone Iyeyasu heard him coming, and buried herself further in the pillows. She had on a dressing-jacket of blue silk and valenciennes lace, over her delicate night-dress, and all Aoki could see of her was a mass of reddish curly hair, half buried in blue silk and cambric.

"You're not really ill, are you, O'Yone-San?" he said, hurriedly, in Japanese, bending over her. "I felt obliged to come and see how you really were myself—I could stand the anxiety no longer."

He put his arm round her shoulders to raise her head and bending down, touched her cheek with his.

"Say you are all right, darling!" he said.

"I have a very bad headache!" said Yone, in a small voice.

"Oh, a headache's nothing," he said. "Look here, dear, I wanted to tell you I am going to Tokio to-day to arrange about our marriage at once. It can't be for a fortnight, I'm afraid, even by special licence. I'll see about it as soon as I get there, and then I hope to get back here in three or four days. You must stay here, of course."

"Oh, Aoki, let me go away!" she said.

"Nonsense, O'Yone-San!" he said, quickly, "you will do nothing of the kind, I shall not allow you to go about by yourself. Promise me you will remain here quietly. Promise!"

"Very well, I promise," said Yone, faintly. "Aoki, do go! I am sure I can hear somebody in the passage!"

"Margaret will see it's all right!" said Aoki, unmoved, strong in belief in the

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efficacy of the two yen, and also in Margaret's feelings of friendship to himself. And he was right. Margaret rose to the occasion.

They heard his sister, O'Sudzu-San's voice at the door.

"Good-morning, Margaret," she said, pleasantly. "How is O'Yone-San this morning? May I come in and see her before I go down to breakfast?"

"O'Yone-San is not feeling at all well, O'Sudzu-San, I am sorry to say!" answered Margaret, in a low voice; "she has a very bad headache indeed. I think she is sleeping a little just now, but I am sure she would be glad to see your honourable self later on, when she wakes up!"

"Very well," said O'Sudzu-San, "I won't disturb her now. Give her my love when she wakes, please, Margaret, and be sure to tell her I came to ask how she was."

"I will be sure to do so, O'Sudzu-San," answered the irreproachable Margaret.

Then O'Sudzu Yamagata went away downstairs and Margaret remained behind the screen, near the door.

"My darling, my darling!" murmured Aoki Yamagata in Japanese, "how I hate leaving you and going to Tokio, but I see nothing else to be done. I must go and settle everything myself. You understand, don't you, O'Yone-San?"

"Yes," said Yone.

"And, dearest, try to go about as usual, won't you? It must be so bad for you to stay in bed. Try to get down before five o'clock to-day, so that I may see you before I leave for Kodzu."

Margaret gave a discreet cough and appeared from behind the screen.

"Excuse me, honourable Sir," she said, "but the ladies are coming out of the dining-room."

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"Thank you, Margaret," he said. "I am just going. Goodbye, my pet—" and he had gone.

He paused for a moment at the door.

"I can rely on your discretion not to mention this, Margaret?" he said, in English.

"Of course, Sir," said Margaret, blushing.

Aoki Yamagata hesitated, and then said, abruptly, "I will give you five yen, Margaret, if you can let me in again at lunch time."

"I will do my best, Sir," said Margaret, discreetly.

"Margaret, Margaret!" called Yone Iyeyasu from the bed. She was sitting up, flushed and trembling.

"Oh, Margaret, why ever did you let Captain Yamagata come in? You know very well he ought not to!"

"I couldn't help it, ma'am," said Margaret, anxiously, "not if it was to save

my life. 'I must come in,' he says, and in he comes, just like Count Ito himself."

"But he isn't Count Ito!" said Yone Iyeyasu, half crying. "Keep everybody away, Margaret, do! My head is so bad, and I feel so ill!"

"Just you lie down quietly, ma'am" said Margaret, who had been many years in Viscountess Iyeyasu's service, and knew her ways well, and who was now busily engaged in patting the pillows and in re-arranging the bed; just you lie down again and go to sleep quietly, and don't you bother about nothing, ma'am. I'll see no one comes in here, and I'll ring for the house-servant to fetch some good strong beef-tea from the kitchen for you, for I don't like to leave you, whilst I go and fetch it myself. You lie quiet, ma'am, and you'll be much better by the afternoon. I'll talk to anybody at the door, and say as you feel too bad to see them."

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Yone Iyeyasu lay down wearily.

"I can't sleep, Margaret," she said, "I hardly slept all night."

"All the more reason you should get some sleep now, ma'am," said Margaret, briskly. "Anyhow, keep quiet, ma'am, and keep laying down. Captain Yamagata will just kill me if you don't get better soon."

Yone Iyeyasu passed the day half dreamily dozing in the luxurious great soft bed, tapestried with white and gold. The soft summer air blew into the big room, through the wide, mullioned windows that looked on the Lake of Hakoné; the silken curtains were partly drawn to keep out the sunlight, but the flickering beams found their way in here and there, and made flecks of white light on the polished boards and on the gay rose and white silk-covered furniture, on the old-fashioned lacquered screens with brass handles and on the big dressing-

table and big silver-framed mirror. Roses stood in many tall flower-glasses and scented the air with their delicate faint presence.

Yone Iyeyasu had a very bad headache ; the pain in her head numbed her senses and dulled her thoughts ; she lay there, scarcely thinking at all. Several times people came to the door, but were stopped there by the faithful Margaret.

After two o'clock when the gong for lunch had sounded, Aoki Yamagata came again.

Yone dreamily looked at him, striding up the long room to her, and Kipling's lines 'like a lance in rest,' came into her head. Aoki Yamagata walked well, and his slight, erect figure and small head gave him an appearance that seemed to fit the words.

Directly he had come in, another knock was heard, and Margaret fetched in a

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little tray, on which was a breakfast-cup full of strong beef-tea and some toast. She brought it up to the side of the bed and Yone Iyeyasu half sat up to see what it was.

"Take it away!" she said, "I don't want it!"

"What's that?" said Aoki. He was sitting on the side of the bed and looked almost mischievous, so relieved was he to find Yone no worse, and evidently only suffering from an ordinary headache.

"Beef-tea, Sir!" said Margaret, in an aggrieved way. "O'Yone-San has had nothing to eat all day."

"You will drink this, dear," said Aoki; put it down, Margaret, I'll see she takes it—go and keep watch at the door."

"I can't take it, Aoki," said Yone, almost crossly and drew back among her pillows, two little tears born of weariness or temper, or perhaps both, forcing their way from her eyes.

Aoki Yamagata busied himself in putting some salt into the beef-tea and breaking up the toast into little squares, and then dropping them into the cup.

"If there's anything I hate, it's toast made soft like that!" said Yone, in a trembling voice.

Aoki laughed and looked up, and saw the tears in her eyes.

"Don't cry, O'Yone-San," he said gently, "and don't be silly; here! drink it at once, without any more nonsense," and he handed her the cup, keeping the little tray in front of himself.

In the dim light she looked almost lovely, in her masses of blue silk and lace and her pretty, red, unbound hair on her shoulders. Her eyes had darker shadows inside than usual, and shone like wet stars, half in anger and half in fear.

"By the Mikado's head, darling!" said Aoki, "I wonder if you know how deuced

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pretty you are? You never seem conscious of it!"

Yone looked at him doubtfully, half smiling. "What a boy he was, after all!"

She drank the beef-tea obediently, and he put the cup back on the little tray, in a satisfied manner.

"That's all right!" he said, and then continued:—"I must ask you one or two questions, O'Yone-San, for the legal part of the thing. What is your whole name? Have you any other but Yone?"

"Yone Jessamine," she answered, blushing hotly.

Aoki got up, and leaning over her kissed her passionately.

"Goodbye, O'Yone-San," he said, "my own darling!" And then he went away.

Silence reigned in the long room. A bee hummed drowsily among the roses, the evening shadows crept up, the dim light

grew dimmer ; in the great Castle, all sounds seemed far away.

The pain in Yone Iyeyasu's throbbing head grew less, as she lay there in the flower-scented room, and she finally went to sleep, long before the sun had fallen over the edge of the purple hills.

CHAPTER IV

THE OTHER MAN

In the afternoon of the next day, Yone Iyeyasu came downstairs. Mrs. Yamagata had paid a visit to her room in the morning, and had begged her not to get up too soon, especially as most of the rest of the people staying in the house were going for a picnic to some ruins many miles away, and would not return till quite late.

"And so no one will be here but myself and one or two of the older women," continued Mrs. Yamagata, in Japanese, "so pray do not hurry down, O'Yone-San. You still look pale, and I am sure a longer rest will be good for you."

"Thank you very much," said Yone, gratefully, in the same language. "My

headache has gone to-day, but I still feel very shaky, so if you don't mind, I will come down late, I think; in time for tea."

And Mrs. Yamagata nodded, and left her.

It was a hot summer's day and in the afternoon the big hall looked cool by contrast with the glare outside, as Yone Iyeyasu went through it, into the drawing-room full of pleasant, enticing, cushion-covered chairs, and proceeded to bury herself in an especially comfortable one by the window, from where she had a view of the entrance-door and of the gardens on the right. Such delightful, old-world gardens, with quaint clipped yew-hedges, and little miniature lakes and bridges.

She had not been there very long when Madame d'Yseulte came in, delighted to find somebody to whom she could talk.

"So charmed to see you downstairs again, O'Yone-San," she cried; "we have all missed your bright presence so much."

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"It is very good of you to say so, Madame," said Yone, who did not much care for Madame d'Yseulte's rather florid kind of conversation.

"And you are quite well, quite recovered?" pursued Madame.

"I'm all right again to-day," said Yone Iyeyasu laughing, "but when these bad headaches come on, I am quite incapable of moving, and so I stay in bed."

"A very sensible thing to do," said Madame, sitting down beside her, and producing some knitting from a little bag hanging at her side. "You still look far from well, dear Viscountess. You must be more careful than you have been lately, about your health. It is a thing much easier lost than regained."

"Oh, I am all right, now, thank you," said Yone flushing a little under Madame's scrutiny. "The others have all gone for a picnic, have they not?"

"Yes, they have; they are also accompanied by the important Miss Alexandra Flott and her vulgar father," answered Madame. "I do not care for picnics myself—I am too old, and perhaps also a little too fat, for these *al fresco* entertainments—I must confess I like to eat my lunch in peace and comfort indoors, without insects and spiders crawling over me. But it is a very different thing for young people, of course; they are indifferent to mere physical discomfort in a good cause!"

"I suppose so," said Yone, merely for the sake of making a remark.

"Miss Conyngsby, for instance," pursued Madame, "would not miss an entertainment of that kind for worlds. Such an opportunity for exhibiting childish freshness and innocent delight!"

They both laughed, but Madame also shook her head.

"Alas, alas, for *cette chère* Miss

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Conyngsby! The eldest son, the heir, the great parti, did not go to the picnic to-day; so the event was deprived of most of its enjoyment!" And Madame shot a keen glance at the Viscountess Iyeyasu over her knitting, to see what knowledge she possessed of Captain Yamagata's movements.

"Mrs. Yamagata told me that her son had been obliged to go to Tokio on business," said Yone, calmly. "But there are many other young men at the picnic, Madame, with whom Miss Conyngsby can console herself."

"Ah, yes!" said Madame, "men of a kind, yes! But no one so immensely rich as Captain Yamagata. Thirty thousand yen a year of his own already, quel parti magnifique!" Madame d'Yseulte raised her hands in admiration of the lucky young man's riches.

"I really don't think he has anything like

so much as that, Madame," said Yone, rather startled. "Money always gets exaggerated."

"But not this," reiterated Madame, in a positive manner. "I heard it from a business friend who knew it on the best authority. Aoki Yamagata has this great fortune already, and of course when his father dies he will be richer still. It is no wonder Miss Conyngsby tries her very best to secure him, but I do not think she will succeed."

"Why not?" said Yone, rather wearily, "she is a pretty girl."

"Pretty, in a way, yes!" said Madame, "mais, elle m'agace—those kittenish ways!—bah!—at her age! That is not the way to succeed with men."

"This is very interesting," said Yone, laughing, "but in any case, Aoki Yamagata cannot appreciate Miss Conyngsby to-day, he is far away!"

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Madame nodded her head wisely. "He will come back," she said.

Yone had tired of the conversation ; she heard some sounds outside, so she got up to look out of the window.

"It surely can't be the picnic-party returning so soon," she said.

"Oh, no, impossible," answered Madame, "It is somebody coming to pay a visit, no doubt. Do you hear a carriage on the drive ?"

"Yes," said Yone ; "ah, yes, I see an American buggy has just turned the last corner—now it is at the front door. Who is it, I wonder ? How tiresome, when we were so comfortable in here !—I shall flee !"

But before she could carry out this amiable intention, the door was opened and the butler ushered in the Marquis Karashi. He came into the room shyly ; a thin man, with a slight stoop in his shoulders, and a small, pointed beard, already tinged with grey, that

made him look older than he really was. He had the quiet dignity of a Japanese noble.

The butler withdrew, murmuring something about informing Mrs. Yamagata, and the Marquis advanced eagerly when he perceived that Yone Iyeyasu was in the room.

"I heard you had not been well, O'Yone-San," he said in Japanese, shaking hands with her, "from Captain Clarke, who rode over to my poor house but yesterday afternoon; I am glad to see you downstairs!"

"Oh, yes, I am well," said Yone, nervously. "You have met Madame d'Yseulte, I think, Marquis?"

He bowed gravely, he had never spoken to Madame on his former visits and had no idea who she was.

"Madame and I are left almost desolate," continued Yone; "most of the people in the house have gone for a picnic to Kiga, and so we are very glad you have come to talk to us."

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It is a long drive from Shira Hata here, is it not ? ”

The Japanese nobles and the foreign members of the Embassies seldom, if ever, use jinrikshas. They are kept in Tokio for the use of the English or French servants of big houses. In the country, where the roads are often narrow for driving, they are sometimes made use of by the nobles, but not often—it is the custom to always drive or ride.

“Only about twelve miles,” said Marquis Karashi; “we do not think much of a twelve-mile drive in Japan.

“I hear your gardens at Shira Hata are very beautiful, Marquis,” said Madame d’Yseulte, “and that you yourself are a great gardener.”

“I spent a great deal of my time in my garden,” said he, rather shortly; “I do not think I can claim any of the results of my head gardener’s efforts, however. Ah ! how

do you do, Mrs. Yamagata ? ” he said, rising, as that lady entered the room. “ I am fortunate to find you at home.”

Marquis Karashi was Court Chamberlain and spoke both English and French with ease. He had lived for several years both in Paris and London.

“ We are a very reduced party here at Okodara,” said Mrs. Yamagata, smiling ; “ most of our guests have gone out for the day. You must stay for tea and brighten us up, Marquis.”

“ I fear I am but a dull companion,” he said, rather primly ; “ but I shall be very glad to stay to tea if you will have me.”

“ I trust your honourable sister O’Chiyé-San is quite well ? ” pursued Mrs. Yamagata, sitting down ; “ I mean to drive over to see her one day soon.”

“ My sister is always busy about her poor people and her chickens, and about numberless other matters,” said the Marquis

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Karashi, "she will be delighted to see you at Shira Hata, but she can seldom be induced to leave it herself."

"I do not wonder at it," said Mrs. Yamagata; "if such a beautiful place were my home, I should dislike leaving it also."

"It will do us great honour, Mrs. Yamagata," said the Marquis, with old-fashioned politeness, "if you will arrange a day for you and all your party to drive over and take the mid-day meal at Shira Hata in the course of next week."

"The honour will be ours," said Mrs. Yamagata, much pleased, for invitations to Shira Hata were not scattered wholesale by any means. Colonel Flott, for instance, was extremely annoyed that no efforts on his part could extract an invitation there for himself and the grand Alexandra.

Yone Iyeyasu had got up from her chair and wandered away to the other end of the room with Madame d'Yseulte, to look at

some flowers. The Marquis looked after her, with more than common interest in his eyes.

"The Viscountess will be your guest next week?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" answered Mrs. Yamagata, smiling, "we hope to keep her with us for some time; she is very lonely at her own home, now that her son is in the Household."

"I suppose so," said the Marquis.

"O'Yone-San looks no more than a girl herself," continued Mrs. Yamagata. "She is immensely proud of Count Ito, who is a dear boy, and not so spoilt as you might expect. But it is tea-time, let us go into the hall."

Madame d'Yseulte and Yone also came there a few minutes afterwards, and a very pleasant, quiet little tea-party took place in a shady corner of the great hall.

"How different it is to our usual entour-

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age at this hour," said Madame d'Yseulte, after they had been there for some time, and Yone Iyeyasu had quite reassured the Marquis about her state of health, by disposing of an astonishing number of maple-leaf sweetmeats and white peppermint cakes.

"It is much nicer as it is!" said Yone, "don't you think? I like being only a few, much better than a crowd; do not you, Mrs. Yamagata?"

"It depends a good deal on who the few consist of," said Mrs. Yamagata, smiling. "What do you say, Marquis?"

"I am quite content with matters as they are," he replied, looking at Yone Iyeyasu, his heart in his eyes.

"Ma foi!" said Madame d'Yseulte, briskly, "I like to hear the young people talking and laughing around me, though a change is always pleasant, even of a good thing! O'Yone-San, I notice you are an invalid no

longer !” she added, mischievously, with a glance at the empty plates ; “ are you going into the garden after tea ? ”

“ Yes,” said Yone, “ I should like to. I will go upstairs to fetch my hat. ”

“ May I come into the garden with you, O’Yone San ? ” said the Marquis eagerly.

“ You may,” said Yone, laughing, and soon she went away to put on her hat, and then she and the Marquis Karashi wandered into the prim, old-fashioned garden, with its dwarf trees and quaint clipped shrubs, side by side.

Mrs. Yamagata looked approvingly after them ; she and Madame d’Yseulte preferred remaining indoors. “ It would be an excellent arrangement ! ” she said mysteriously, addressing no one in particular.

“ He seems decidedly *épris* ! ” answered Madame, wisely.

“ A delightful man,” said Mrs. Yamagata. “ A little dull, perhaps, for O’Yone-San, but

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one cannot have everything; as the old countrywomen say, 'There is even a crease in a maple-leaf'. The Shira Hata property is one of the finest in the whole of Dai Nippon."

"Ah!" said Madame, "what matters a little dulness in that case?"

Then they talked of other people and things only interesting to themselves, of the people they had known abroad, and of their children, for Madame d'Yseulte had also two daughters, safe in the haven of matrimony.

Meanwhile the Marquis Karashi and Yone Iyeyasu wandered down the garden paths in the soft summer-evening air, by the great hedges of syringa and masses of sweet-smelling flowers. They talked, or rather he talked, and she listened, about his home life at Shira Hata, of his dogs, his garden and more especially of his chrysanthemums.

"They do very well with us," he said; "I must show you my chrysanthemums,

O'Yone-San, though it is yet too early to see them in full flower."

They were walking down a long, straight path of the landscape garden, bordered with pink and white stocks, and godetias and Japanese shrubs, to a quaint little summer-house at the furthest end.

"Let us go in and sit there." said Yone.

Everything looked at its best in the garden, so bright, so gay; the contrast between it and her own feelings suddenly struck Yone Iyeyasu, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Why should I be made so unhappy?" she thought, in passionate revolt, and the tears rushed faster to her eyes.

The Marquis Karashi was in the middle of a long disquisition on the most profitable kinds of chrysanthemums to grow at Shira Hata, when he saw she was almost crying. and stopped aghast.

"O'Yone-San, what is the matter?" he said. "Is anything wrong?"

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"Please don't take any notice of me," she faltered, "I shall be all right directly." But her blue eyes looked out at the shimmering sunshine, through mists of misery.

"Something is distressing you," he said, gently; "can I be of service to you in any way?"

"Oh, no!" she said, despairingly, "you can't do anything for me; it is only—only—it all looks so happy, so bright, the garden, the world, I mean; and yet how deceitful and miserable it is, in reality; but it all looks so different to what it really is!"

"I should not have thought you found the world such a miserable place, O'Yone-San," said the Marquis, sensibly; "surely you exaggerate! Will you not tell me what is the matter? or is it only that you are weary of Dai Nippon and long for the civilization of the West?"

"No, oh no!" cried Yone, the tears were

rolling down her cheeks now—"but I wish, I wish I were dead!"

"O'Yone-San'" said the Marquis, startled out of his shyness, "are you sure I cannot help you? Is it anything to do with Count Ito?"

Visions of debts and extravagances floated before the Marquis Karashi's economical mind, but never mind!—he would pay anything, advance any amount of money, if only:

"Oh, no!—it has nothing to do with Ito, faltered poor Yone. "Ito Iyeyasu is always a most dear, good boy—it's only me, myself, and I'm only stupid, though I'm really very unhappy too!" She had relapsed into Japanese, as she usually did when agitated.

"And you will not let me help you?" said the Marquis, hesitating. "You understand me, O'Yone-San, there is nothing—nothing I would not do for you, to the half of my estate!"

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Her blue eyes with their shadowy dark rims, looked at him gratefully.

"You cannot do anything," she said; "nobody can! I tell you, I am only stupid. I was in bed all day yesterday, perhaps I am ill! Please forget I cried, and go on talking about your home at Shira Hata. I like to hear you! you do not bother me like the others do when you talk, I like to listen!"

"I cannot talk of my own affairs when you are in distress, O'Yone-San," he said, puzzled, as indeed, poor man, he well might be.

"Yes, yes, do!" she cried, "I like listening to you, Marquis."

What wonder the Marquis Karashi, used to women of all countries as he was, should think she cared for him! though, as a matter of fact, Yone never thought of him in a sentimental light as yet; the Marquis's rather monotonous conversation suited her

that afternoon, so she said so. That was all.

They got up and walked about the garden again, he talking of impersonal things, till Yone felt quite cheerful again.

At last they heard the carriages driving up to the front door, with the returning picnic-party. The Marquis Karashi looked at his watch.

"It is half-past six," he said, surprised at the lateness of the hour; "I must order my buggy at once." He usually drove a very light American buggy, suitable to the narrow roads of the country.

"Is it really so late?" said Yone; "Yes, we must go in; I will say good-bye to you here, by this little door, I can get to my room this way. Good-bye," and she nodded, brightly.

The Marquis went in by the front entrance and found Mrs. Yamagata still in the drawing-room, but now surrounded by her other guests.

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“What a noise they make!” thought the Marquis, “no wonder she is glad to get away and have some peace.” A view of the Viscountess Iyeyasu’s feelings that would much have astonished Mr. Munékito.

“I have come to say good-bye, Mrs. Yamagata,” said the Marquis, rather primly.

“Will you not stay and dine with us?” said that kindly lady, “it is very late for you to go back to Shira Hata without dinner!”

“I thank you, no!” he said, “I cannot stay to-day, but if to-morrow—if you would extend your most kind invitation to to-morrow, I would be only too delighted to accept it!”

“Of course, come by all means! we will expect you at eight, then, to-morrow, Marquis Karashi, and you will stay the night, of course. Mr. Yamagata would be most annoyed if I did not ask you to do so.”

"Thank you, I shall be very glad," said the Marquis.

"The hermit is coming out very decidedly!" said Mr. Furihata to Miss Conyngsby, as the Court Chamberlain left the room.

"Is he not?" she answered, gaily—she did not yet know of the long walk with Yone Iyeyasu, or she might not have felt so amiably disposed to the individual in question; "I daresay the poor man gets tired of his own society and is glad of a change!"

Miss Conyngsby felt unusually friendly to all the world; she had not spent an utterly wasted day. Captain Clarke had passed most of it at her side, and though he was neither a baronet nor a rich man, "still everybody knows," reflected the fair Julia, "that the Engineers are the brains of the English Army—'Quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime, il faut aimer ce qu'on a'. If

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Aoki Yamagata is such a fool as to see no one but Yone Iyeyasu, I must turn my attention to other people." Thoughts that would have much alarmed Captain Clarke, who possessed nothing but his pay, and had no idea of matrimony for many years to come.

The picnic party had had a very pleasant day. Clara Bentinck, a nice, fresh-faced girl, and Captain Saigo had been inseparable, while her sister Jenny, who possessed serious views, had been strongly attracted by the bachelor captain of an American man-of-war, now in Yokohama harbour; a man of good family and an old friend of Mrs. Yamagata's, who had known him very well in New York—he often came to Castle Okodara and joined in the expeditions from there. Mrs. Bentinck was a fat, comfortable matron who felt little anxiety about her daughters' future, they were all well provided for in the way of money and sure

to marry quite soon enough, she thought. Still she liked to see them appreciated.

"I do not wish to hurry the dear girls," she said to her husband, as she told him the events of the day, while they were dressing for dinner, "but you know, John, it would be a good thing if they fancied the right people. So many girls don't nowadays, and have a miserable married life. I have noticed several cases among families we know quite well. Our girls are sure to marry soon with their fortunes and looks, and I must say Captain Silas K. Peterson seems quite unexceptionable."

John grunted rudely.

"How you run on, Janet!" he said. "Just like a woman! taking everything for granted, just because a man speaks a civil word. Besides I don't want the girls to marry for some time—I've educated them and brought them up, and I don't see why I should not get some pleasure out of their

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society myself. Marriage is all a woman thinks of! her sole idea!"

Mr. Bentinck struggled grumpily with a refractory tie.

"Oh, John!" said his wife, reproachfully, "how can you? I am sure I never tell the girls they must marry soon!"

"I should think not, indeed!" said John, savagely.

"But all the same," continued his wife, "marry they will, and now is the time for them to do so happily, before they get designing and calculating; they should marry while they are still young and fresh!"

"Like their mother was when I married her!" said John, without sarcasm.

"Perhaps so, dear!" said Mrs. Bentinck, smiling comfortably, "but not like many unmarried girls nowadays—Miss Conyngsby, for instance," she continued, hesitating, for she did not like speaking evil of anyone.

"Have it your own way, my dear!" said

John, who had now tied his tie to his satisfaction, "only remember what I say is, I won't have my daughters flung at any man's head. I prefer keeping them at home."

"John, how dare you say such things?" cried fat Mrs. Bentinck, indignantly.

But John Bentinck only laughed and told her not to be a fool, but to hurry up with her dressing and come down to dinner, well knowing his comfortably-minded wife was little likely to indulge in plans or manœuvres of any description, and that she took events as they came with a placid content that was sometimes rather annoying. Everything turned out for the best, she always felt sure; she would like her daughters to marry well, as what mother would not, but that was all; Clara and Jenny and Marion could expect little aid otherwise from their mother, and neither did they want or wish for it. Mrs. Bentinck could not have helped them much in any case—a kindly lady to whom diplo-

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macy was unknown—"and as to Father! . . . dear Father is just like a blundering bluebottle!" Marion said one day, "but the most dear old bluebottle you could find in the Yew-nited States."

CHAPTER V

SHIRA HATA

The Marquis Karashi and his elderly sister, O'Chiyé-San, were sitting at breakfast in the garden-room at Shira Hata—a square room that jutted out from the main building and had long French windows on two sides, reaching to the ground; essentially a summer-room; you were practically in the garden. It was comfortably but not extravagantly furnished. The chairs and sofas were covered with big rose-flowered Kyoto silk, quantities of soft cushions lay about on the floor, covered with pale-tinted satins, and the walls were partly lacquered with golden chrysanthemums and partly made of sheets of glass, which allowed a corridor full of flowers to be seen through

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them. It was the Marquis's favourite room in the house; from here, on two sides, he could walk in and out to the garden through the French windows. Flowers were everywhere; it was the beginning of September; the great banks of chrysanthemums were scarcely in bud and their place was filled by masses of sweet-smelling substitutes; a group of deep-red roses filled a silver bowl in the middle of the breakfast-table, on which was spread a luxurious breakfast—hot cakes, honey and marmalade, maple-cakes and little jugs of thick cream, fish-patties and tiny lobsters, stood on china plates on the white cloth; while the hot and more substantial dishes occupied a side-table and were kept at a right temperature by a small range of spirit-lamps. O'Chiyé-San was a decided-looking woman of fifty-five, dressed in a grey flowered kimono, her substantial waist surrounded by a rich obi of violet silk, fastened with pure gold.

O'Chiyé-San disapproved of the new influx of European ways into her native Japan, and though in deference to her brother's wishes she wore Paris dresses on great occasions, she clung to her lovely and far more becoming kimonos in private life.

The Marquis's mother had died many years before, so O'Chiyé-San had taken her mother's place and ruled the household in her stead. Even should the Marquis now marry, O'Chiyé-San was entitled to great consideration, and might, if she chose, make things very unpleasant for a wife. Long habits of command had given her, perhaps, a too determined manner, but her slanting dark eyes had a kindly look, and the poor people with whom she had to do and who came to her for assistance in domestic crises, knew well that they seldom asked O'Chiyé-San in vain for help. While she helped them, she scolded also, but after all

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what did that matter, so long as they got their needs substantially satisfied?

O'Chiyé looked a picture of serene, if severe, propriety as she sat at breakfast with her brother.

"I wish you to write to Mrs. Yamagata after breakfast, sister," the Marquis began, speaking, of course, in his native language, "and ask her to come to the mid-day meal here next Thursday, and to bring all her party. I fancy they are about fourteen in all that will care to come."

O'Chiyé-San looked suspiciously at him.

"You seem to have taken an immense fancy to these people, Karashi," she said; "hardly a day passes but you go over to Okodara. What is the attraction, may I ask?"

"There is nothing remarkable in my visiting a house so pleasant as Castle Okodara," said the Marquis, somewhat annoyed.

"Mrs. Yamagata is a nice, good-natured woman enough, and I have nothing to say against her," continued O'Chiyé-San; "still they are merely rich, middle-class people, not descended from a Daimyo or Shogun family, and not to your liking so exactly, I would have thought."

"They have charming people staying with them," said the Marquis; "people to whom I wish you to be specially civil on Thursday, sister."

"Ah! is that it?" said O'Chiyé-San, stiffly. "I thought it probable. May I enquire the name of the woman—for I conclude it is a woman—you wish to honour?"

She spoke as if the Marquis were a rather naughty little boy.

"What woman do you mean?" said her brother. "I mentioned none."

"You certainly mentioned no lady by name, Karashi," said O'Chiyé-San, drily,

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"but I am not yet in my dotage, I can put things together as well as another, I fancy—and I ask you again, who is the lady to whom I am to be especially civil on Thursday?"

Marquis Karashi's sallow face coloured angrily.

"You may as well be told, as you seem to desire it, sister," he said; "though I had not intended you should know as yet. The Viscountess Yone Iyeyasu is coming here on Thursday, I hope, and I also hope before long to induce her to become my wife."

O'Chiyé-San sat aghast. She had found out a great deal more than she desired to hear even hinted at.

"Yone Iyeyasu I have not seen, Karashi," she said, at last, "but I have heard of her. She is a young and very pretty widow, much given to the admiration of men."

"She cannot help men admiring her, I

suppose," answered the Marquis, shortly; "she is the most charming woman I have ever seen."

"No doubt," said O'Chiyé-San, still more drily. "But a widow! . . . I would have preferred you had chosen an unmarried girl for the mother of future Karashis, and above all, one of pure Japanese descent. This woman is tainted by European blood on her mother's side."

"I could wish she had not been married before, myself," replied her brother abruptly, "but what is a fact already accomplished cannot be altered. Yone Iyeyasu is the only woman in the world for me, but I am by no means confident she will not refuse me."

"There is small chance of that," said O'Chiyé-San, who firmly believed her brother to be a model of all manly graces; but the Marquis shook his head doubtfully.

"I am dull and uninteresting by the side

of the men she is accustomed to," he said. Then he looked at his sister and spoke earnestly.

"My heart is very much in this, sister—I trust I may rely on your assistance?"

O'Chiyé-San was pleased to be appealed to; she had, all his life long, guided and ruled her much younger brother.

"I will see the young woman, Karashi," she said, primly, "before I can promise anything. I trust she is worthy to succeed our mother as mistress of Shira Hata."

"Whether you think her worthy or not, sister," said the Marquis, with unexpected fire, "she is the lady I intend to ask to fill our mother's vacant place as mistress here, and I expect her to be treated with consideration." Then he added, more peacefully, "The Viscountess Iyeyasu is the daughter of the Baron Hayashi, a well-known diplomatist, and the widow of a man of mark."

"I am glad to hear she is so respectable," said O'Chiyé-San, with some tartness, "for when a man of your age falls in love, he cares little for the proprieties of life."

"You have no cause to make such a remark to me, sister," said the Marquis, much annoyed. "When have you known me disregard the proprieties of life, may I ask?"

"You have not before now done so, I admit, Karashi, except by adopting far too many of these outlandish European ideas," replied O'Chiyé-San, sharply; "but in choosing a flighty widow to succeed our sainted mother, I cannot say I approve of your judgement."

"A flighty widow!" said the Marquis, angrily, but O'Chiyé-San went on:—

"A girl of undoubted family—the Princess Minato, for example—would have been far more to my liking."

"To your liking, perhaps, but not to

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mine," said the Marquis shortly, as he pictured to himself the Princess Minato's flat face and ungainly figure and high cheek-bones. "In the matter of a wife, my sister, I choose for myself."

"I trust it may turn out well, Karashi," said O'Chiyé-San, piously and disapprovingly. "Whatever happens, you cannot say I have not warned you."

O'Chiyé-San was, however, at heart very good-natured, and devoted to her brother; also, on occasion, she stood not a little in awe of him; so seeing he was by now getting seriously annoyed, she added, more amiably:—

"I have not yet seen Yone Iyeyasu, so I should not pronounce judgment on her. I only wish for your happiness and the well-being of our house, Karashi, you well know."

But the Marquis was offended and returned no answer—he got up from the

table and attacked a pie on the sideboard in a vicious manner.

“What day did you say you wished these people to be invited, then, Karashi?” said O’Chiyé-San, after a pause. “Thursday? Well! I will write to Mrs. Yamagata at once. I shall have plenty to occupy my time till the day arrives, giving orders for the entertainment of so large a party. At least eight of my chickens must be killed.”

The Marquis said nothing; he cared nothing about the chickens, though O’Chiyé-San did; she never failed to visit her poultry-yard every morning, even on the wettest day. When the Marquis Karashi passed his sister’s chair, in leaving the breakfast-room, she stretched out her hand and took hold of his. “Do not let us two quarrel, O brother, whatever happens!” she said earnestly, her eyes full of tears; “my own lord, I but wish for your happiness!”

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The Marquis stooped and saluted her, but in a grudging manner.

"Your meaning is good, O'Chiyé-San," he said, "only you must remember there are some things in which a man will not brook interference." And he went out.

O'Chiyé-San reflected bitterly on the ingratitude of even the best of men, and the senselessness of European ideas, according to which, a man not only required to see his wife before marriage, but even expected to be pleased by her appearance.

"Here have I been his companion and friend for years," she thought, "and now, for the sake of a pretty face, he would not care if he cast me off entirely. It is the way of the European world, I suppose, but it is hard to bear when it comes to Japan. Well, Well! I must begin seeing to the Dower House and get it ready for occupation, for when wives with modern ideas

come in, it is time that elderly sisters find new homes. It will be hard to leave Shira Hata, where my life has been spent" !

O'Chiyé-San sighed, and got up rather wearily from her chair at the table. She had been mistress of the Great House for so many years, it was disagreeable to think of living in the Dower House—a square, many-gabled, one-storied building, two miles from Shira Hata itself, with good gardens and approached by a fine avenue of double cherry trees ; not a home to be despised, by any means.

O'Chiyé-San was not of a despondent nature, nor likely to remain depressed for long, mourning over what seemed inevitable. She rang for the Japanese housekeeper, a very important person indeed, and gave her concise orders to prepare for the luncheon party next week : the jellies and creams to be made, and most elaborate confectionery ;

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the game pasties to be arranged, and the many otherwise idle retainers to be sent out to shoot the necessary wild birds and hares.

“The Marquis wishes it all to be especially well-done, O’Yei Osuka, said O’Chiyé-San. “He has received much hospitality from Mrs. Yamagata, and we should not like her or her visitors to go away with a poor opinion of the resources of Shira Hata.”

“The honourable lady may rest assured of my best efforts,” said O’Yei Osuka, severely. “Shira Hata can hold its own against any of these new-fangled places.”

O’Yei Osuka had heard of the French chef and his satellites at Okodara, from the man that the Marquis took with him when he drove over there in his American buggy; also more than a hint of the present exciting state of the master’s affairs had penetrated to the housekeeper’s apartments

at Shira Hata. O'Yei Osuka was determined her future mistress should be impressed by her culinary achievements.

In the afternoon of this same day, O'Chiyé-San drove over to call at Okodara, anxious to inspect the lady who had inspired such strong sentiments in her usually impassive brother, but she made a useless expedition—the whole party at Okodara were out on the Lake of Hakoné and she could only show her good will and relieve her mind, by writing a special message on very thick crêpe paper for the Viscountess Iyeyasu. Mrs. Yamagata smiled when she saw the letter on her return home in the evening, and showed O'Yone-San's name on it to Madame d'Yseulte.

“Matters progress!” said that lady.

“Oh, yes!” said Mrs. Yamagata, “I have no doubt about his intentions at all, they are unmistakable in a man of that kind; but I am by no means sure that Yone Iyeyasu will

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have sufficient common-sense to accept him. I fear it is very doubtful."

"Surely not!" said Madame d'Yseulte; "such an excellent match!—even if he is a little uninteresting and not a hero of romance. Perhaps even a little heavy!"

Mrs. Yamagata smiled.

"I am anxious to see the result of all this, I must confess," she said. "I do not think Yone Iyeyasu will marry again merely for the sake of position and money. She has enough for contentment already—but one can never tell. She may really like the Marquis Karashi for himself, they are constantly together and she seems to prefer his society to that of the younger men. And then what a position! Next to the Foreign Representatives' wives, the Marquis's wife will take precedence of every lady in the Imperial Palace, next to the Family itself. He is High Chamberlain, you know."

“So you have told me,” said Madame d’Yseulte; “as you say, Yone Iyeyasu would be a fool to refuse him—but I do not give her credit for such stupidity; such a thing, believe me, is impossible!”

CHAPTER VI

MISGIVINGS

It was Wednesday morning and Yone Iyeyasu woke up in her big, gold-lacquered room, with a vague idea that something unpleasant had happened or was going to happen. Everybody knows this feeling and has experienced it at some period of existence; it may be induced by a late supper of lobster or toasted cheese, or by bad dreams, or perhaps by going to sleep with a mind very full of some grievance. Yone Iyeyasu tried to collect her thoughts and remember what was the matter. . . It was Wednesday. Aoki Yamagata would come back from Tokio to-day. Did she not want him to come back? No, it was not that, exactly. One reason Yone kept

so very youthful was, doubtless, because she had a faculty for putting all unpleasant and uncomfortable things at the back of her mind, as it were, and not thinking of them or troubling about them. She could not do so about the events of last week, but still Aoki Yamagata had been away—everything in her surroundings had continued its usual even routine—and Yone had done her best to forget that he was arranging their immediate marriage and a complete upheaval of her ways of life.

Her life was a very pleasant one, she hated such an upheaval. Aoki himself had personally a great attraction for her, but if she had not been obliged to do so, she felt she would never have risked marrying a man so much younger than herself—if only from notions of vanity. Yone felt sure Ito Iyeyasu would be simply furious if she really married Aoki Yamagata, and yet—she must! . . . what else could she do? Of

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the Marquis Karashi she thought but little. Of course she knew he admired and liked her, but she had never taken into consideration the idea of marrying him, or cared to think of it or of his wishes about marrying her; as, in her own mind, she thought it out of the question to do so. She did not wish to marry at all, she felt, quite crossly. Why should men worry her in the way they did? The Marquis, at least, was quiet and soothing, she liked talking to him. After she had had her early tea and her bath, and while Margaret was dressing her, she reflected with pleasure on the thought that Marquis Karashi had said he was coming to Okodara to-day.

"Which dress will you wear this morning, ma'm?" inquired Margaret, when Yone's red-gold hair had been carefully arranged at the back of her small head.

"My blue linen," said she; "it is the prettiest of all my morning frocks and I

have not worn it here yet. . . The Marquis said blue was his favourite colour," she added, in her own mind. She always felt a disposition to please the person next or nearest, without any plan about it, as Miss Conyngsby, for instance, would have had. Yone Iyeyasu was a person who did harm unintentionally, and quite without any beforehand plannings. She was like a butterfly getting all the pleasure of the passing hours, without any care for the consequences. Not that she expected any consequences to result from so simple a matter as pleasing the Marquis's taste by putting on her blue frock. She went down to breakfast, however, feeling satisfied she could have chosen no garment that could have suited her better.

It was a lovely day and many people had been invited to Okodara for a garden party. They were invited at half-past three o'clock. A Japanese garden party much resembles

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an English one, except that people do not talk so much and are expected to eat much more. The refreshments at Okodara were of the most elaborate description : cakes and sweets in the form of flowers and leaves, most faithfully coloured and copied—a plate of white chrysanthemum cakes looked exactly like a handful of real flowers—and little red imitation lobsters crawled all over the tables. They represented wishes for long life—that the host wished his guests to live till their bodies were doubled up with old age, as were the lobster's. There was also a quantity of little sugar pine-trees for happiness, and sugar cranes, like the lobsters, for long life. One huge cake represented the mountain of Fujiyama made of white sugar, with a pink summit, and with little pine-trees round the base. Glasses of a thick sweet white wine were handed round on trays as well as tea and coffee.

All the afternoon long, carriages drove up

the entrance drive, varied by jinrikshas and carrying-chairs. The Marquis Karashi drove his sister over in an old-fashioned glass coach, horsed with a pair of well-matched chestnuts. He drove well and showed to greater advantage than he usually did, as he controlled the spirited horses with a strong hand, and guided them, much objecting, past a noisy group of coolies in the drive. Yone Iyeyasu was standing at the drawing-room window and saw him, but with the variableness of feminine nature, she only thought how much handsomer Aoki Yamagata would have looked doing the same thing. The thought of Aoki made her feel very serious, and when the Marquis Karashi discovered her and introduced his sister, O'Chiyé-San, to her, that lady was very favourably impressed by the reserve and quiet dignity of her brother's chosen bride.

The Marquis had impressed on O'Chiyé-

San during the drive from Shira Hata that nothing was as yet settled between himself and the Viscountess Iyeyasu, but O'Chiyé considered it simply impossible that any woman in her senses could dream of refusing the High Chamberlain, backed up by the broad lands of Shira Hata.

So she paid little attention to her brother's diffident remarks and treated Yone Iyeyasu with a deference very unlike her usual abrupt manner to strangers.

As Yone had never seen her before, this meant nothing to her, though it caused a good deal of interested amusement to the other people in the room. O'Chiyé-San was the great lady of the neighbourhood and was conducted to the dining saloon by the master of the house, while the rest of the company followed in strict precedence.

Yone Iyeyasu found herself sitting next Mr. Furihata, the barrister, whose quiet

sarcastic conversation she always enjoyed ; she wondered sometimes how much of her complicated affairs Mr. Furihata guessed at. At least he knew a good deal about Aoki Yamagata's admiration for herself, and she felt he possessed an inconvenient faculty for putting two and two together. But she felt safe with him, at least he had no wish to make love to her. Perhaps he would have said, if he had been asked, that he was not so sure about it—he was fond of seizing every chance of talking to her, but this may have been only from a sense of rivalry, for he knew he was little likely to be carried away by sentiment, and an important judge's "elderly, ugly daughter" would probably be his fate in the distant future. He was a prudent and calculating young man, but he liked talking to Yone Iyeyasu—she had none of the ordinary affectations of the usual pretty woman.

After first refreshments she was claimed

by the Marquis for a walk in the gardens. And they wandered away down the shady paths as they had so often done lately. The Marquis did not intend to say anything definite that afternoon, he wished his formal declaration to take place at Shira Hata on the morrow. He had a well-ordered mind and felt it would be appropriate in the extreme to lay his hand and heart and magnificent belongings all together, at the feet of his lady love, where she could best see and approve of them. But his manner was lover-like, as much so as possible; he had eyes and ears only for Yone Iyeyasu, and scarcely spoke to anyone else all day. Tea was laid out also on small tables in a trellised verandah as well as in the dining saloon, and there many of the party were assembled, when finally the Marquis and his companion remembered, or rather she remembered, for he would willingly have remained alone in the gardens with her

till doomsday, that it was tea-time and they ought to return to the others, and manifest some interest in the events of the day.

Miss Conyngsby noticed them leave the rose-garden, and said ill-naturedly :—

“ There are O’Yone-San and the Marquis at last ! ”

“ Why do you say ‘ at last ’ ? ” said Clara Bentinck, laughing.

“ They have been in the rose-garden for hours,” replied Miss Conyngsby. “ I really cannot understand anyone being such a glutton for admiration as Viscountess Iyeyasu. If it is not one man, another will do just as well ! ”

“ But she and the Marquis are betrothed, are they not ? ” said a lady, sitting near. “ I have been told so once or twice this afternoon.”

“ Oh, I don’t know,” said Miss Conyngsby, jealously, “ very likely it is true ; if Yone Iyeyasu can find nobody better.”

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"It would be difficult for her to do so!" said the lady, with some severity. "The Marquis is one of our principal noblemen of Japan. I quite understood—" she paused, unwilling to commit herself further.

Aoki Yamagata had just come out of the house and heard most of the conversation; he coloured angrily, and looked at the advancing couple. He had just come from Tokio, had breakfasted at Yumoto, and come on by the short cut by riksha, and arrived at Castle Okodara just an hour before this; when he had dressed, and come out to the garden. "Infernal nuisance this party is!" had been his inward comment, and now to be immediately confronted by Yone in the middle of a serious flirtation, still further annoyed him. Miss Conyngsby turned her head and saw him standing behind them. She gave a delighted start.

"Oh, it is you, Captain Yamagata!" she cried. "I had no idea you had come back! When did you arrive?"

“Just now!” said Aoki shortly, shaking hands with her and raising his hat to the other ladies, whom he hardly knew. His manner was even shorter and more careless than usual, and Miss Conyngsby coloured with annoyance.

“Aoki Yamagata gets more bearish every day!” she said to herself. “I hope he heard what I said about Yone Iyeyasu. He won’t like that.”

The Marquis and Yone had now come up, and Aoki Yamagata moved forward to greet them.

Yone had forgotten he would probably arrive sometime to-day; she was not a person given to fainting or making scenes, but the realisation of all that his return meant was too much for her and she turned so deadly white that Aoki thought she would have fallen. He put a chair for her hastily, and she sat down, hardly knowing where she was.

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"You are faint, my dear!" said kindly Mrs. Bentinck, hurrying up, "you have been standing about too long in the hot sun. Take this eau-de-cologne!" and she fussed over her, like a friendly hen. O'Yone-San took the eau-de-cologne thankfully, and leaned back, her senses gradually returning.

"I can't think why I am so stupid," she murmured, "I suppose it is the sun." She still looked very white. The Marquis had hurried off, greatly distressed, in search of brandy; he felt full of compunction for having caused her illness, by having kept her standing about in the sun too long.

Aoki Yamagata had fetched a cup of tea immediately and now handed it to Yone without saying anything at all. She took it and tried to raise the cup to her lips, though her hands shook pitifully and she nearly let it fall.

Two or three other ladies were now press-

ing round her, suggesting remedies, and doing her more harm than good ; she felt as if she were being driven mad. She looked pleadingly at Aoki Yamagata, who was still standing close by her chair.

“ I think the Viscountess Iyeyasu will soon be well if you leave her alone,” he said, impatiently ; “ she cannot breathe if she is so surrounded.”

“ Yes,” said Yone, inconsequently and gratefully—“ I will be all right directly, thank you—if I don’t speak.”

“ Well, keep the eau-de-cologne, my dear !” said Mrs. Bentinck, kindly, and walked away ; so did the other ladies, much offended, one of them, the wife of an attaché, saying as she went, to a companion, “ What arbitrary manners that young man has—he is positively rude !”

So Aoki and Yone Iyeyasu were left alone.

He said nothing till he saw the colour

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come back to her lips and cheeks, then he asked how she felt and she turned to him with a little smile.

“I am so sorry, Aoki,” she said, hastily, “it is so unlike me to faint in this way.”

“Did you do so because you saw me?” he said, rather angrily. “I do not see why the sight of me should make you faint, as if I were an ogre in a story-book.”

“It was not that,” said Yone, with rising colour, “I was only surprised to see you—I did not know you had returned from Tokio. I am very glad you have come.”

“You have a curious way of showing your joy, then,” said Aoki, still annoyed. But Yone had recovered now and said, in her usual manner:

“I must have been standing about in the sun too long, I never can stand a hot sun—and I wanted my tea. Please get me some more tea now, Aoki Yamagata, will you?”

And something to eat too, I am famishing."

He took the cup from her and laughed.

"Recovering, O'Yone-San?" he said, and went away, quite satisfied, to fetch supplies for her and for himself. He returned, followed by a footman, carrying the materials for a nice little meal, which he told the man to arrange on a bamboo table between them.

"I am as hungry as a wolf," he said. "I have had nothing since I breakfasted at Yumoto, at seven o'clock."

"You poor boy," said Yone, softly, "you must be ravenous! Why ever did you not have some lunch as soon as you arrived here?"

"I wanted to see you as quickly as I could," said Aoki; "that was why. And you rewarded me by turning as white as a ghost, when you saw my hateful countenance."

"Do not be so stupid, Captain Yama-

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gata," said Yone, laughing. "You know better than that. At any rate, eat now—begin with this chrysanthemum flower."

While they were sitting there the Marquis Karashi returned, bringing his sister with him. When on his way to the house in search of brandy, he remembered O'Chiyé-San always carried some sort of restorative, as she was subject to a form of heart attack, so he went to look for her, instead of continuing his way to the house. He was some time finding her, for she had gone to the ladies' rooms with Mrs. Yamagata and a few other women of high degree. When the Marquis at last discovered her, he took her aside, looking so perturbed that O'Chiyé was quite alarmed.

"What misfortune has befallen you, Karashi?" she inquired, hastily.

"Yone Iyeyasu is ill, fainting!" he said; "come along with me to her at once—you have your restorative with you, I suppose?"

and he hurried her off as fast as he could.

"But Karashi," she panted, "I do not understand. In what manner did O'Yone-San become ill, and where? Surely someone else is attending to her, you have not left her alone?"

"With no thought, I kept her standing too long in the hot sun," said the Marquis, "and she fainted, or very nearly did so, when we got to the place where the other guests were having tea."

"Ah me!" said O'Chiyé-San, "a healthy young woman has no business to faint in that manner. Had you been saying anything to agitate her, Karashi?"

"No," said the Marquis, "certainly not; and she seemed as bright and lively as possible, up to that moment."

They had now turned the corner of the house and came in sight of the verandah, in a corner of which Aoki Yamagata and Yone

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Iyeyasu, now quite alone, were having their tea.

"She seems to have recovered," said O'Chiyé-San, drily, as they approached.

"She could not remain fainting for ever," retorted the Marquis savagely. "I could not imagine where you had hidden yourself—I have been a long time looking for you."

He went up to Yone and said, rather stiffly, "I have brought my sister to see if she could do anything for you, O'Yone-San.

I am glad you have so far recovered."

"I was only a little faint," said Yone, blushing, "I am quite well again now. I am sorry you should have troubled O'Chiyé-San on my account," she added, turning to that lady, and speaking in Japanese.

"That is of no consequence whatever, O'Yone-San," said the Marquis's sister, rather out of breath from the pace at which he had hurried her along; "I should have

been delighted to have been of any assistance. It was unconsidered carelessness of Karashi to keep you standing in the heat instead of having tea at a reasonable time."

"I pray you sit down," said Yone Iyeyasu, laughing, "I will not hear the Marquis blamed at all—we were having a most interesting discussion about something or other, and did not think of matters so commonplace as tea."

Her face was still pale, and her blue eyes looked more dark and shadowy than usual. O'Chiyé-San's heart went out to her, in a way that surprised herself.

"A very attractive little person, I must confess," thought O'Chiyé-San. "I scarcely wonder at Karashi's infatuation—he has some reason for it."

She sat down, as she was asked to do, and talked on indifferent subjects for a few minutes, the Marquis meanwhile gazing on

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Yone Iyeyasu with the expression of a large mastiff longing for a bone.

Aoki Yamagata continued his tea stolidly, making a conventional remark at intervals. They were all rather stiff and uncomfortable and no one was sorry when O'Chiyé-San said, in her decided manner, "Come, Karashi, it is time we started back to Shira Hata. We have a long drive before us," she added, smiling at O'Yone-San. Already she felt she loved this pathetic little face, so unlike that of the determined sister-in-law she had pictured to herself.

"Goodbye, dear O'Yone-San," she said, suddenly—it was very unlike her usual habits to call anyone "dear"—"I shall hope to see you to-morrow in the enjoyment of your usual health. No—do not think of coming with us," she added, to Aoki Yamagata, who had risen with the evident intention of escorting her to her carriage—"the Marquis Karashi will look after me;

you must stay here and attend to Yone Iyeyasu."

She and her brother walked away, leaving the other two in the verandah. O'Chiyé-San said as they went, as if the Marquis were in some way responsible.

"Karashi, that dear child is unhappy, she has something on her mind—what is it?" She spoke in Japanese.

"I only wish I knew," said the Marquis. "Heaven knows I would make her happy if I could."

"I am glad you like her, O'Chiyé-San," he added, after a pause.

"I do like her," said his sister, abruptly, "she is a very taking personality—who is that young man, Karashi? The son of Mr. Yamagata, I think somebody said. He seemed to me to have a very possessive kind of manner when he spoke to Yone Iyeyasu."

"He has," said the Marquis, much

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annoyed, "you are perfectly right, sister, he has a most possessive manner; in fact there is no doubt, from what I have observed before he went to Tokio, that he trespasses on her sweet nature, and takes advantage of it."

"You must prevent it, Karashi," said O'Chiyé-San, angrily, suddenly coming to a standstill and digging her sun-umbrella firmly into the lawn. "Did the sight of him make her faint, do you suppose?" she added, suspiciously; "where was he when it happened?"

"He had just come up," said the Marquis, "but that is a very far-fetched notion. The sight of him would not make her faint, he is merely a hectoring boy."

O'Chiyé-San shook her head solemnly, and resumed her way.

"My advice to you, Karashi," she said, "is to put matters on a proper footing as soon as possible." And O'Chiyé-San marched in-

to the house, followed by her brother, who marvelled at her penetration, and determined to follow her advice the very next day.

The Marquis's mind was a slow-moving one, but when he had once made it up on any subject, he was hard to move. Now he had fully decided that Yone Iyeyasu was to be his wife if he could manage it, and he felt capable of a good deal in the way of sweeping any moral obstacle out of the path of his desires. If the moral obstacle turned out to be a very substantial one in the shape of Aoki Yamagata, the Marquis had not yet formulated a plan for disposing of him, but that should come with time. Who was this boy, indeed, to baulk him, a middle-aged man and a noble of Japan? He growled to himself as he gathered up the reins, and made the chestnuts fly along the road to Shira Hata at a pace for which he would have been summoned in civilized Europe. The solitary, fat policeman of the district gave a

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sort of gasping squeak when he saw the well-known livery go by.

“The Marquis has the devil in him this day,” the country’s guardian remarked solemnly to himself.

CHAPTER VII

A STRONG MAN'S WILL

"Come for a little turn in the garden, O'Yone-San!" said Aoki Yamagata soon after the Marquis and his sister had disappeared; "it is nice and cool there now. It cannot do you any harm to take a little stroll with me, now the sun has gone down."

So they got up and went into the garden, through its quaint alleys and funny cropped dwarf yew-trees, bordering the neat gravel walks. The evening scents of the flowers lay heavy on the air.

"You have not asked me yet what I did in Tokio, O'Yone-San," said Aoki Yamagata. "I had a lot of trouble in arranging all things as I wished."

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"Oh, tell me about it!" said Yone, eagerly, "did you settle anything definitely, Aoki?"

"I settled everything!" said Captain Yamagata, proudly. "We are to be married, by both civil and religious forms, on Thursday of next week."

Yone gasped. Aoki's plans were indeed complete!

"I thought you would like to be married in some well-known place, such as the Tokio office, O'Yone-San," he continued, contentedly, "so I took some rooms close to it, as soon as I got up to Tokio, and had my things moved in. I must go again, I suppose, for the look of the thing, though I do not know that it is absolutely necessary, as I've left Harris, my man, there."

"Is that all one has to do to make a marriage legal?" asked Yone, nervously.

He laughed. "I also bought a special

license, O'Yone-San," he said, "and I interviewed the man who will execute us. I made it all right, dearest."

"Thursday is a week to-morrow," said Yone, after a short interval of calculation. "I may go away before, may I not, Aoki? I can't stay here till then," she said, pleadingly; "Aoki, please don't ask me to, I can't, indeed!" She spoke in English.

"My dear Yone, you will stay here," said Aoki, firmly, in Japanese. "In fact you must—I am not going to have you fussing about and making yourself ill. Here you will stay, till I take you up to Tokio myself on the Wednesday."

"But, Aoki," said she, desperately, "how deceitful your father and mother will think me, if I stay here till then as their guest, and then go straight from here to be married to you, without telling them a word about it."

"It cannot be helped," said Aoki, obstinately, "I can give them no reason for hurrying on our marriage, and it is much better for all the talking to take place after it is done, than before. In fact, it's impossible to say anything about it," he said, more angrily; "really, O'Yone-San, I wonder your proposing such a thing."

"I did not do so," said she, nervously. "I know what you mean—we cannot tell them about it first, I know—but at least, Aoki, I need not stay in your mother's house till the very day before we are married; she will never forgive me for deceiving her so!" Yone's voice trembled with distress.

"My dear child!" said Aoki, who always got colder and calmer as she became excited, "be sensible—I need ask the permission of no one, before I marry."

"No, I know you need not, in a way," said Yone, "but still your mother would

expect some deference to her opinion—anyhow, it makes me seem so horrid, I hate it! Let me go to my own country house, if you do not like my going to Tokio.”

“O’Yone-San,” said Aoki, “I know you very well by now. If you left here and went anywhere by yourself, you would imagine all kinds of obstacles to your marriage to me. No! you shall stay, and everything will go on as usual till the Wednesday. Then we will go up to Tokio and be married the next morning, and nobody can talk nonsense about it till it is all over. In the meantime I can look after you myself!”

Yone Iyeyasu was silent, there seemed no more for her to say.

“By-the-by, O’Yone-San,” continued Aoki, “you seem to have been talking a great deal to the Marquis Karashi—those gossiping people at tea (so Aoki referred to his mother’s guests) said you were to

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marry him. Have you seen much of him lately?"

"Oh, yes!" said Yone, carelessly, "he has been here nearly every day."

"Has he, indeed?" said Aoki, sharply, "and he wishes to marry you! O'Yone-San, this is too much of a good thing!"

"He certainly has never said so," said Yone, amused. "I wonder you pay any attention to such gossip, Aoki. In any case I cannot marry him, whatever he wishes, so what does it matter?"

"You will avoid him in future, though, O'Yone-San," said Aoki. "I hate to see him hanging round you and staring at you like he does."

Yone laughed.

"Oh, Aoki, how absurd you are!" she said. "What can it matter how the Marquis looks at me? I do not suppose he ever dreamt of marrying me, poor man! I don't suppose his sister would let him," continued Yone,

wisely, "she looks after him as if he were a little boy."

Aoki looked round to see that no one was in sight, and then took her arm in a friendly way.

"I've settled ten thousand yen a year on you, O'Yone-San," he said, "in case of my death. And I am giving you four thousand yen a year pin-money—a thousand a quarter.

"Oh, Aoki, what a quantity of money!" she cried, "How can you afford to give me all that?"

"I am rather well-off," said Aoki, laughing. "Didn't you know it, O'Yone-San, or did you think my grandmother only left me a few hundreds of yen?"

"I knew she left you a good deal," said Yone Iyeyasu, gravely. "Madame d'Yseulte said it was thirty thousand yen a year, but I thought that was only exaggeration. I did not believe her."

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“No, it was not exaggeration,” said Aoki; “as a matter of fact, I have thirty thousand yen a year. I am glad of it for your sake, O’Yone-San, we’ll have no end of a time! I have a house in the Northern Island, too, with rather good shooting, and I thought we’d go there after our marriage.”

Yone said nothing, but looked troubled and confused. She felt it made it almost a worse crime on her part to marry him, now she knew that he was enormously rich—the Yamagata family would say she had deliberately inveigled him into it. Still no woman can ever be really sorry to hear that her future husband is very well-off, and soon she and Aoki were discussing the many ways in which they could enjoy themselves. He talked, and she listened and agreed—his plans suited her exactly; she really enjoyed his views, and entered into them thoroughly. She felt their marriage was a

settled thing. "It could not be altered now," she said to herself, "whether his people disapproved of it or not." They talked about the houses they would live in; the yacht he would build; they had gone through the garden and into a range of glass-houses devoted to peaches and wall-fruit. In the furthest of these houses, Aoki, feeling himself safe from interruption, sat down on one of the shelves used by the gardeners for pots and cuttings, and with his arm round Yone's waist discussed his future affairs with great glee.

"Oh, Aoki, what shall we do about your mother?" she said, suddenly. She won't like this at all—she will never speak to me again!" A mother is a much more important person to be reckoned with in Japan than in Europe.

"Oh yes, she will!" said Aoki, confidently. "She'll be rather unpleasant at first, of course, but she loves me, her

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only son, too well to remain estranged, and will be as agreeable as possible later on."

He jumped up from the shelf in haste, footsteps were coming along the next house; but it turned out to be only an under gardener, who apologised with an immovable countenance for his intrusion, took up a pot of seedlings, and went away again.

"I suppose it must be nearly time to dress for dinner," said Aoki, grudgingly. "Thank goodness, in another week I shall have you all to myself, with none of these other people dividing your attention."

"Perhaps they think much the same of you," said Yone, mischievously, as Captain Yamagata gave her an affectionate squeeze.

"Give me a kiss, O'Yone-San!" he said, "and come into the house, it is late."

There could be no greater contrast to the Marquis's rather laboured and courtly language. Yone Iyeyasu laughed, and let him kiss her, in English fashion.

“Aoki Yamagata is really a dear, nice, unaffected boy,” she said to herself; “why ever should I not be quite contented with what he has arranged?”

CHAPTER VIII

A PARTY AT SHIRA HATA

The next morning was lovely in the way of weather. What can be more charming than a really fine day in Japan, at the beginning of September? A purple haze hung over the Lake of Hakoné and the pine-covered hills looked a faint grey in the middle distance.

“Too hot for violent exercise,” said Santo Munékito. They were all again in the dining-room, having breakfast. Mrs. Yamagata was seated behind the tea and coffee equipage, but most of her guests were still walking about the room, choosing what they would have from the hot dishes on the side-table; two or three were still upstairs and not yet on the scene, among them, Yone Iyeyasu.

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"There will be no violent exercise to-day, Mr. Santo," said Mrs. Yamagata. "You forget you are all to accompany me to Shira Hata. It is a long drive and we must leave here at half-past eleven. O'Chiyé-San prepares lunch at one o'clock."

"I am looking forward to our day at Shira Hata," said Madame d'Yseulte. "We could not possibly have had a more perfect day, if it had been especially manufactured for the occasion."

"No, indeed!" said Mrs. Bentinck, "it is excellent weather for us. How are we going, Mrs. Yamagata? In the large carriages, I suppose."

"I have ordered the brake and the landau," said Mrs. Yamagata, "and there are also two buggys available for any young men who like to drive themselves. You must all sort yourselves as you wish," she added, benignantly, nodding to her guests—"I will not interfere."

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"How delightful!" said Clara Bentinck, heartily, and then blushed furiously, when the others laughed—and she said hastily, to recover her confusion, "I never stayed in a more charming house, Mrs. Yamagata, you let us all do just as we like."

Mrs. Yamagata looked pleased.

"As long as you are happy, O'Clara-San, that is all I desire," she said, kindly.

"Do not count on me or on Yone Iyeyasu for your expedition to-day, mother," said Aoki Yamagata; "I am going fishing in the Hayagawa and she is coming with me."

"Aoki," said his mother, aghast, "I am very sorry, but I really must insist on taking O'Yone-San with me to Shira Hata."

"I do not see why," said Aoki, coolly.

"O'Chiyé-San made a special point of her coming," said poor Mrs. Yamagata, divided between the fear of offending her important son and the horror of arriving

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at Shira Hata without the principal guest.

"I do not often interfere with your plans, Aoki," she continued, "but Yone Iyeyasu must come with me to-day."

Just then Yone herself entered the room and came to the end of the table to say good-morning to her hostess.

"What will you do, O'Yone-San?" asked the inconvenient Niko, "Mother says you are to go to Shira Hata to-day, and Aoki says you shall not do so."

Yone Iyeyasu blushed, and looked at Aoki, who was on the other side of the room, helping himself to hot matsu cake. He gave a faint shrug of his shoulders, as his mother said in an annoyed manner, very unlike her usual contented one:

"Dear Niko, what nonsense you talk; attend to your breakfast, please, and leave other people's affairs alone. But seriously, O'Yone-San, I hope you will not desert me

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to-day. I especially wish you to drive in the landau with me."

"Of course—I will be only too pleased to do so," said Yone, hastily.

Mrs. Yamagata smiled again, much relieved.

"That is settled, then!" she said, and turned to Mrs. Bentinck, who was sitting near her, saying—

"People in the country do not like having their plans upset at the last moment, do they? And O'Chiyé-San made a point of my bringing the whole of my party to lunch—I know she would be much annoyed if the Viscountess Iyeyasu were missing."

"Yes, just so!" said Mrs. Bentinck, who was an unobservant person, and thought a great deal too much was being made of Yone's presence or absence. "Enough to make any young woman conceited!" she thought.

After breakfast was over, and Aoki was

in a corner of the hall, sorting out his fishing-rods, Yone went up to him and said, anxiously—

“You do not mind my going to Shira Hata, do you, Aoki? I could not understand what you had said about it, before I came down.”

“Oh, it’s all right!” he replied, “my mother made such a point of your going, you could not get out of it; but of course I dislike the idea of Karashi hanging about you all day long.”

“He can’t do that,” said Yone, laughing, “what would become of all his other guests?”

“Much he cares for them!” said Aoki, struggling with the joint of his rod.

“Why don’t you come too?” said Yone, wistfully.

“I—no, thank you!” replied Aoki. “I am going to fish all day, and I had intended taking you with me.”

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"I would like it, said Yone, eagerly.

"No, you cannot come now, mother is determined you shall go to Shira Hata," said Aoki. "It is all settled, we cannot change again—go you must."

"I would much rather go out fishing," said Yone.

"I will take you out with me to-morrow, darling," said Aoki. "But look here, O'Yone-San, remember, you are not to flirt with the Marquis to-day, I will not have it!"

"I never flirt," said Yone, in a disgusted manner, "I hope I never do anything so vulgar."

"Well, it's something very like it, darling," said Aoki, "a deuced good imitation, I can tell you! Just get off that line, will you, dear?—you are sitting on it."

"Aoki, after being at Sandhurst, had been attached to an English regiment for

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three years, and spoke English like an Englishman.

O'Yone-San obediently got up and then held the line while he reeled it up—she liked being with Aoki, and would have enjoyed a long day by the Hayagawa, among the rocks and the big tree ferns.

Still, after next week, she would be with him always, and Mrs. Yamagata would evidently be cross if she did not go with her to Shira Hata.

Miss Conyngsby looked at them over the banisters, as she was going upstairs to put on her out-door things, and almost made up her mind to waste no further attention at all on Aoki Yamagata.

“What can he see in that woman?” Miss Conyngsby thought, bitterly. “A person with almost red hair, and absolutely no conscience!” And she continued her way upstairs, much ruffled, and nearly

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ruined a nice new hat, by stabbing it so viciously with her hat-pin.

At half-past eleven the whole party were assembled in the hall, ready to start for Shira Hata, excepting Aoki and his brother Niko, who had gone fishing with him, much pleased at being so honoured.

Mrs. Yamagata took Yone Iyeyasu and Mr. Bentinck in the landau, while Mrs. Bentinck was supposed to chaperone the party in the brake. It was a lovely morning and everything and everybody looked in the best of spirits.

When the large party were all satisfactorily placed in the carriages they started off, the landau leading the way. Down the long avenue of Castle Okodara, past the funny little stone lodge, smothered in flowering shrubs, and out on to the winding road by Lake Hakoné.

"It is a pleasure to be alive on a day like this!" said Mrs. Yamagata, looking

as usual the essence of cheerful good humour.

"You ought to get some of those dyspeptic people down here, who are always asking if life's worth living," said Mr. Bentinck, laughing, "though I've no doubt they'd find something to cavil at, if they came."

"Poor things," said Mrs. Yamagata, "I always feel so sorry for them; some people do nothing but grumble continually over what cannot be helped, instead of making the best of things as they are."

"That is what they find pleasure in doing," said Mr. Bentinck, "a good grumble enlivens them. Now to-day, fine as it is, a man of that kind would see a prospect of rain in the near look of those hills."

"That is a sign of rain, isn't it?" said Yone, looking brightly round, "and yet how lovely it is! that distant hill over there looks so close, you can see the pine-trees on it, and usually it is only a grey blur. It's

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a lovely day. Do you not regret wasting it on a possibly stupid luncheon party, Mr. Bentinck?"

Mr. Bentinck laughed.

"I regret nothing at the present moment," he said, "In my present company, the measure of my content is full."

"What a charming compliment!" said Mrs. Yamagata, laughing, "You will make us positively conceited."

"Yes, indeed," said Yone, "go on, Mr. Bentinck, tell us something more of the same kind."

The old gentleman laughed, and shook his head.

"Wait till you get to Shira Hata, young lady!" he said; "you will be sated with admiration there, if I am not much mistaken."

They drove up many steep hills and down others, across small bridges over rocky streams, and over one big bridge with stone

arches that crossed the Hayagawa, on the further side of which the Shira Hata property began. Not far from the bridge, but still four miles from the house, they skirted the smoking ground of Oyigoku, which means "The Greater Hell." The ground is hot to the touch and clouds of evil-smelling smoke force their way through the thin crust of earth. The air is thick and heavy with the sulphurous fumes and the scorched ground either white with ashes, or yellow with sulphur. This boiling valley is also called Owaki-dani, "the Valley of the Great Boiling."

Yone heaved a sigh of relief as they left this dismal place behind them.

"The Marquis Karashi's property is of great extent, I believe?" remarked Mr. Bentinck.

"Oh, immense!" answered Mrs. Yamagata, "and besides all this, he owns a very valuable estate near Nagasaki."

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Yone looked thoughtfully over the lands she was driving through ; whatever she may have said to Aoki, she knew very well that all this could have been hers had she so pleased, had it not been for—; what was the use of thinking about it ? Her fate was settled, and it was a pleasant fate enough. Riches in excess—though tainted by trade, which till late years was much looked down on by the nobles of Japan—but not the feeling of a king in miniature, that hangs round a large and ancient landed property. She was silent as they drove along through forests of pines and fir-trees, partly surrounded by stone walls, out again on to the road across the hills, past two lakes, from which, with a whirr, there rose a cloud of semi-tame wild duck, and where black geese and other curious water-fowl floated on the silvery surface and hid among the rushes round the edge ; out through the north lodge of the park and past a pretty creeper-

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covered samurai's cottage—through a stretch of well-kept grass-land with smooth gravelled drive, to the private gates of the great house.

Shira Hata, one of the most ancient Daimyo strongholds, towered before them, in the midst of its smooth lawns and gravelled approach, its great stone-framed windows glittering in the summer sun. The old house, built partly of wood and partly of stone, flanked by square towers, stood up boldly in the sunlight; and on the great marble steps, under the archway, stood the Marquis Karashi, waiting to receive his guests.

The dignity of a well-bred gentleman doing the honours of his own house, sat easily on his thin, tall figure, and slightly-stooping shoulders. The gleam of anxiety in his eyes gave way to a look of unfeigned pleasure as soon as he saw Yone Iyeyasu. He opened the door of the carriage himself,

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and greeted her and the other occupants warmly.

"Welcome to Shira Hata," he said, in a low tone, to her alone, and then moved on to meet the other people in the brake, which drove up a few seconds after they did, asking Mrs. Yamagata to wait till he returned to her, as he wished to take them indoors himself.

"It is the perfection of simplicity!" thought Yone, as she went by his side into the great hall, with the figures in armour standing sentinel round the walls, and the light falling in many-coloured lozenges through the painted windows on to the stone floor.

Two men-servants only, in plain Japanese clothes, a butler and under-butler, were in the hall to receive them.

The Marquis took his guests into the great cool modern drawing-room, full of flowers and plants, with sunshine streaming

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in on its white carpet, strewn with yellow roses, its white-and-gold furniture, and white-and-gold walls. Six rooms led one into another from the drawing-room, divided to-day only by open arch-ways, all the sliding panels having been thrown open, contrary to custom, and the entire suite put in order and decorated with flowers.

"I wish Shira Hata to look its best!" the Marquis had repeated anxiously to his sister, who was now in his full confidence, "I wish it to make the best possible impression on her." There was no need for him to explain whom he meant by "her."

O'Chiyé-San nodded a hearty acquiescence. "It shall do so, Karashi," she said, "do not fear; the house shall look as it has never looked since our father died."

And she kept her promise. The head gardener had stood aghast at the orders to devastate his nurseries, but O'Chiyé-San's

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orders admitted of no pandering to his own feelings—the very best of everything, fruit and flowers, was to be brought indoors.

“And what occasion for this disturbance?” old Yasaki had said sulkily to O’Yei Osuka, the housekeeper. “It resembles little the Karashi family to make of such importance these foreigners and second-class families.”

“Half the fruit could have been left on the trees and the chrysanthemums will never recover the change of climate from their proper atmosphere. It is not like O’Chiyé-San to be so lavish, wise and careful as she ever is.”

“There may be a deep and powerful reason for it all, O’Yasaki,” said O’Yei Osuka, mysteriously. “Changes may be on the way to Shira Hata. ‘The best of everything,’ the Marquis ordered, with his own voice, and you well know how little notice he takes of the house-matters as a

rule. It is time we had a Marchioness here again, say I, for there is only one meaning could be put to all this trouble over a luncheon party."

"I wonder at your being so forward with the honourable master's plans, O'Yei Osuka," said old Yasaki, disagreeably, "but women will say anything, in reason and out of reason."

"Out of reason, indeed!" said O'Yei Osuka, indignantly; "but you never had any sense more than an owl, Yasaki, and I will confide in you no more."

"Likely you have no more to tell!" retorted old Yasaki, chuckling, but still he felt the occasion was an important one. "The name of the honourable lady, I presume, you know not?" he inquired, grudgingly, before leaving the housekeeper's room, where he had been summoned to see his mistress on the Wednesday morning.

"And if I could betray it, I would not, O

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Yasaki," replied O'Yei Ouska, bristling with offended dignity. "Would I betray the honourable master before anything is settled, it may be?"

O'Chiyé-San received Yone Iyeyasu on Thursday with marked attention; all through the day she was treated as the most honoured guest, but she was accustomed to be made much of and noticed nothing significant about it herself, though the rest of the party did. After lunch most of the elder ladies went into the garden-parlour with O'Chiyé-San, and the rest of the party scattered themselves over the house and garden.

"You will allow me to escort you?" the Marquis said to Yone Iyeyasu, and she smilingly assented. He took her out into the garden, which was, after all, much the same as the one at Okadara, through the long walks bordered by sheaves of stocks and gaudy flowers, and all kinds of flower-

ing shrubs and plants . . . through the landscape-gardens, with their quaint little bridges and miniature lakes and waterfalls. He explained to her his favourite points of view, and Yone listened, and agreed, and admired.

She was, in truth, a very pleasant companion. She listened with unfeigned interest to his remarks on gardening, for she knew a good deal about it herself. Then they went on to the conservatories and through one glass-house after another, stocked with pines and grapes enough to supply a monster hotel.

"You must grow a great deal more fruit than you require," she said, looking at the dozens of pineapples, ripe and unripe, in one of the houses; "you and O'Chiyé-San can never get through all these."

"Hardly," said the Marquis, smiling, "my sister gives away a great many, and

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also I send hampers of fruit at intervals to the Leper Hospitals."

"How glad they must be to get it, poor things!" said Yone, with ready sympathy; "what a nice idea for you to have, Marquis!"

They had sauntered through the houses and had come out through a side-door into the kitchen-garden. Here Yasaki, the head gardener was standing in wait for them, much brushed up, and holding two or three forced white curly chrysanthemums in his hand.

"This is Hira Yasaki," said the Marquis, kindly. "How long is it you have ruled in Shira Hata Gardens, Yasaki? Over twenty years?"

"Twenty-two years, most honourable Marquis," said Yasaki. "May I be allowed to offer the lady some poor chrysanthemums?" and looking at Yone Iyeyasu with admiration and friendliness in his twinkling

old eyes, Hira Yasaki gave her the flowers he was holding.

“Oh, thank you, are these for me?” said Yone, with her prettiest smile and a kindly look in her blue eyes. “Thank you greatly, O Yasaki, they are lovely chrysanthemums—what are they? I do not think I know them.”

“White Emperors, O most honourable,” said Hira Yasaki, looking with the air of a connoisseur at the great white fragile blooms, so faintly tinged with pink in the heart of them.

The Marquis smiled. “Thank you, O’Yasaki,” he said, and the old gardener went off to his tea, well pleased with himself.

“If that is the lady,” he reflected, “I wish the honourable master all success in his wooing, and I approve. A nicer, sweeter pair of blue eyes I never hope to see; the same as two good specimens of *nemophila*.”

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Of course it is not necessary to explain that Yasaki only thought and spoke in his native language.

“Let us go and see the picture gallery,” said the Marquis, presently. “You must be tired of walking about the garden, O’Yone-San.”

So they went into the house again and up to the picture gallery. Uninteresting rows of portraits covered the walls of the long corridor, relieved every now and again by a good landscape. Stiff ladies looked down on Yone in kimonos and gorgeous obis, some young and fair, others fat and middle-aged, flanked by stately Daimyos and Shoguns in armour.

“You are not here yet, Marquis,” remarked Yone, when they had come to the end of the gallery, and she had sat down on the edge of a window overlooking the park.

“No,” he said ; “O’Chiyé always desires

of me to have my portrait painted, but I thought I would wait until I possessed a wife to share the honour."

"And the worry," said Yone Iyeyasu, laughing, "it is such stupid work sitting for one's portrait; and it takes such a long time."

The Marquis Karashi was silent, he was thinking.

Yone got up to go, but he put out his hand to stop her.

"Wait a moment, O'Yone-San," he said, hoarsely, "I have something to say and I do not know how best to say it. I love you, O'Yone, will you be my wife?"

He had meant to say so much more, to make a more formal speech, but he could only repeat, passionately—"I think you must know how I love you! Dearest, will you marry me?"

He looked eagerly into her face, which had become very white.

"I am so sorry, but I can't," she said, "I wish I could."

The Marquis took her hand in his.

"Dearest," he said, "if you wish you could, does not that mean there is some hope for me? What can prevent you marrying me, if you wish to?"

"I can't tell you," said Yone, trembling, "but I mean it. I can't marry you. I am very sorry you care for me in that way."

"You knew I did, O'Yone-San," he said, sternly, "I do not think you could have mistaken my love for you, or my intention to marry you, if you would consent."

She was silent and sat looking out over the green trees of the park, her eyes full of tears.

"Can you not care for me at all?" said the Marquis. "Am I hateful to you, O'Yone-San?"

"It is not that," she said quickly. "I like and admire you, Marquis Karashi, so

much ; you don't know ! I would marry you if I could, but I can't, so there is no use thinking of it."

" Why not ? " said the Marquis, puzzled by this extraordinary statement.

" I cannot tell you ! " said Yone, again, turning her face away, but she put up her hand quickly to her eyes, and he saw she was crying.

" O'Yone-San ! " he said gently, " do you not think it is rather unfair to me, to say so much and no more ? You say you would like to marry me, and yet you cannot do so. Have you promised to marry another man ? "

She did not answer, and he said again, sternly—

" Are you engaged to be married, O'Yone-San ? "

" Not exactly . . . I don't know," she faltered.

" My dearest," he said, impatiently, " you

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must know if you are definitely engaged to anybody or not."

"I never said anything, exactly," she said, nervously.

The Marquis paused, and then said—"In that case, I fail to see why——"

But Yone interrupted him.

"Oh no! you will not understand! I cannot marry you. There are lots of nicer people," she continued shyly, "you had better forget me as quickly as possible."

"My dear child, you are talking nonsense." said the Marquis, rather angrily. "I am not a fool, O'Yone-San. As I wish to marry you, I am not likely to change my own mind."

He thought for some minutes, and then said:—"I shall be offered the post of Ambassador in London before long, I have been informed privately by my Imperial Master. The life in London would be congenial to you, I imagine. Are you so

sure you cannot promise to marry me, O'Yone-San? You are probably magnifying some trifling obstacle in your own mind."

"Trifling obstacle!" thought Yone, half amused; "what would Aoki think of being referred to as a trifling obstacle!"

"Perhaps you have made some imprudent promises," the Marquis continued, "but if you are not definitely engaged to another man, I do not see why you cannot promise yourself to me."

Yone took her hand from his, but still sat quietly thinking, thinking of a way out of her difficulties. How much more suitable to her in age and position was the Marquis Karashi than Aoki Yamagata. What a more dignified step-father for Ito Iyeyasu, who would, she knew, be furious with her for marrying Aoki. Aoki Yamagata's riches did not appeal to her as they would have done to many women, for she had never known the

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real want of money. Though not especially rich, she had always had enough to do what she and Ito wanted—as yet. Things might be different now he was in the Household; he would perhaps want much more money than she could hand over to him.

What she dreaded in marrying Aoki, were the years to come! when she would be quite middle-aged while he was still a young man. No amount of argument could do away with this fact, for fact it was! Just now, she was young enough for him, almost younger even than he was, in her ways and feelings; but the inexorable years would creep on and on, till she would find herself in the unpleasant position of a young man's ancient wife!

How she would hate it! Whereas with the Marquis it was all quite different. He was older, by many years, than she herself. As an Ambassador's wife her position would be for life honoured and suitable; and Ito,

though he would no doubt prefer that she remained as she was, and did not remarry at all, would soon be reconciled to a step-father who could be of so much advantage to himself. Suitable!... yes, that was the exact word,—suitable. Nothing could be more suitable in every way to her, than a marriage with the Marquis Karashi. Perhaps Aoki Yamagata was marrying her from a sense of honour only? Perhaps if she asked him to re-consider the question, he would give her up. It was not likely, as she knew very well—but still, she would temporise, she really could not marry Aoki next Thursday! She meant no harm, only to do the best for all. Meanwhile the Marquis was waiting patiently, a gleam of hope in his eyes.

“O'Yone-San,” he said at length, “what is your decision?”

She turned to him, quickly. “Listen, Marquis Karashi,” she said. “I do not

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know, I cannot say for certain, but if I can, I will marry you, Only I cannot absolutely promise to day."

"My darling," he said, eagerly.

"No, do not say that!" said Yone, shrinking back, "do not call me your darling, or anything like that, only—don't let it be decided now, let me think how I can manage it, still, for one week."

"You are mysterious, O'Yone San," said the Marquis, a happy light in his eyes. He looked on his cause as won.

"I would like to claim you as mine to-day, still it shall be as you say. You are too precious to me, for me to refuse you anything, even if it is unreasonable. For one week, then, I must address you as Viscountess Iyeyasu in public, and at the end of the week, we will rearrange our affairs."

"I have not promised anything," said Yone, in an agony of fear, remembering Aoki and his power over her. "Remember,

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I cannot promise, you had much better forget me altogether—I am nothing like the nice person you imagine I am,” faltered poor Yone, miserably.

“Darling, I am the best judge of what I wish my wife to be,” said the Marquis, gently. “If I can win you, O’Yone-San, my happiness is assured.”

The clang of a gong sounded through the hall and gallery, first inside the house, and then the man who carried the gong, took it outside, and sounded it again on the terrace, and down the garden paths, calling the stragglers in to tea.

“It cannot possibly be late enough for tea!” said Yone, startled.

“It is half past four o’clock,” said the Marquis, after consulting his watch. “My sister ordered tea rather earlier than usual, because of the drive back for you all.”

“We must go down, then,” said Yone, getting up from the window-seat.

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"If you wish it, dearest," said the Marquis, disappointedly. "I suppose we may as well—it will cause remark if we do not—but I could sit here for ever with you, O'Yone-San ; your mere presence satisfies me as nothing in the world has done before."

She smiled shyly and put her hand on his arm.

"Perhaps some-day we may sit here again," she said, in a low voice.

He pressed her little hand, and then raising it to his lips, he kissed it gently.

O'Chiyé-San looked questioningly at her brother, as he and the Viscountess Iyeyasu came into the drawing-room, but his face told her nothing. If he had been refused, he bore it very well—he looked his usual, quiet, self-contained self. O'Chiyé-San dispensed the tea and talked impatiently, waiting anxiously for the moment when these people would be gone, and she could

have her brother to herself. She was not the only person who felt curiosity about the events of the afternoon. Mrs Yamagata was burning with suppressed, well-meaning questions, suppressed till a convenient time came for putting them to the Viscountess.

Tea at Shira Hata was a pleasant function; the groups of young people were scattered over the big white-and-gold room, so filled with flowers that it was almost like a conservatory. The Marquis shook off his usual shyness, and did his duty as host very well.

His mind made pictures of the day when Yone should sit in O'Chiyé-San's place and dispense the hospitalities of his ancient house. Alas! how often visions are raised on a mirage!—floating on sands of desire.

Yone Iyeyasu sat in a corner drinking her tea, almost in silence; she told Santo Munékito quite simply she did not wish to

talk, when that lively youth approached her. She was pursuing the train of thought she had begun upstairs, in the picture-gallery. Would it be possible for her to get out of the arrangements made for their marriage by Aoki Yamagata? He would not hear of its even being put off. She would not dare to ask him; far less to stand against his anger. It was useless to think of it! No! she must marry Aoki, but what a pity it was!

The Marquis would have suited her much better, though no doubt she would be happy enough as Aoki's wife. Always since her childhood, as soon as she knew any event was fixed beyond recall or alteration, it had been enough to put her against it; and to make her do all she could, to get out of what seemed inevitable. So it was now. A week that very day, next Thursday, Aoki had fixed should be her wedding-day. Even if she went away to her own home she knew very well Aoki would follow her, and make

her marry him. It was useless for her to fight against Aoki's strong will—he had very little trouble in making her submit to him.

“What a weak-minded fool I am!” thought Yone, self-contemptuously, but she knew that did not alter the fact that she was almost like a doll in her strong young lover's hands. She drank her tea despairingly, out of the eggshell china cup, which she thought, with whimsical sadness, might have been her very own if she so desired. “Such good eggshell china!” she thought to herself, “almost priceless, I should think!”

“Are you tired?” said the Marquis, coming up to her, and O'Chiyé-San looked round, quickly and anxiously, remembering the fainting attack of yesterday, at Okodara.

“You look pale, O'Yone-San,” she said, in Japanese. “I really must insist on your

having a glass of cordial before your long drive. Karashi, ring the bell at once."

Yone Iyeyasu smiled rather wearily and said she was quite well, but O'Chiyé-San took her energetically in hand, and carried her away to a small sitting-room of her own, where she administered the cordial. It sent a little colour into Yone Iyeyasu's pale cheeks.

"You must be careful not to overdo yourself, O'Yone-San," said her hostess, kindly, as if to a child, "you do not look to me at all strong."

"But I am!" said Yone, "I very seldom have anything the matter with me, only I am a little tired now, and rather troubled, O'Chiyé-San!"

She looked at the stiff old lady almost imploringly—and O'Chiyé-San was pleased at what she considered a very becoming timidity. She patted Yone Iyeyasu's hand kindly.

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"I think I understand, O'Yone-San," she said. "I sympathise with my brother's feelings also—you must not mind such an elderly person as myself, saying that I sincerely hope all will be arranged as he wishes!"

"I do not know," said Yone, her blue eyes violet with distress. "I am not sure, O'Chiyé-San, you had better tell the Marquis Karashi to forget all about me, and to marry a purely Japanese young girl."

"Nonsense, my dear," said O'Chiyé-San, briskly, "you are morbid and unstrung.

Put all these foolish ideas away and marry the Marquis at once."

Yone laughed, she could not help it. "At once!" . . . what an idea! or the beginning of ideas! . . . At once! . . . if it were possible, that was the only solution of the problem—and that, of course, was quite out of the question.

As Mrs. Yamagata got into her carriage the Marquis said.

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"I shall be at Okodara almost as soon as you are there yourself, Mrs. Yamagata."

"Of course," she replied. "I have not forgotten your promise to dine with us to-night. We need not say good-bye."

He looked past her at Yone Iyeyasu's fair, small face, but it was turned away—she would not look at him—she would not delude him further. If things turned out as Aoki Yamagata had arranged, this time next week she would be the wife of another man. Yet it would be for Aoki's good to deceive him and for her to marry the Marquis. What a nuisance it all was! she thought impatiently, she would really much rather not marry anyone at all, and live alone.

The carriage rolled smoothly on, over the high road, the hills turning purple and grey and black in the deepening dusk, the soft air of the Japanese hill country blew gently in her face. After all, it was good to live,

whatever happened; she would not worry, events must decide themselves. She could not, and would not, make Aoki an enemy.

"The dear boy," she said to herself, and smiled out on the dying summer day. Mr. Bentinck and Mrs. Yamagata talked together and left her in peace, imagining she had a headache. But Yone Iyeyasu had no headache, she even ceased to feel bothered—the state of affairs was really quite exciting!

"I cannot marry them both!" she said to herself, "but really I wish I could."

CHAPTER IX

BURNT CHRYSANTHEMUMS

The next day, Friday, an evening reception was to take place at the neighbouring Summer Palace on Lake Hakoné, where some of the Imperial family were in residence. The Marquis Karashi and his sister were, of course, going, and all the party from Okodara. It was a drive of seven miles to the landing-stage on Lake Hakoné, from where the guests were ferried over the lake by men in the Imperial liveries of crimson and black and gold, to the Palace on the Island.

Before starting, the party at the Castle of Okodara were to assemble in the dining-hall, to have hot soup and liqueurs and various other nice things, to fortify them

for the drive. Yone Iyeyasu came down rather late, dressed in a heavy smooth white satin dress, that clung to her delicate limbs in straight, soft folds, and fell into a very long train at the back; these long trains are insisted on at the Japanese Court functions. She wore some beautiful diamonds on her neck and in her red-gold hair.

Miss Conyngsby looked at her enviously, as she came down the great staircase, her little feet in pearl-embroidered shoes, peeping in and out. Margaret followed her, carrying a magnificent cloak of feathers and some shining blue stuff, lined with white fox-fur.

"How can girls on a shabby allowance compete with these married women, who can spend what they choose on their clothes?" thought Julia Conyngsby, jealously, as she noticed the movement of nearly every man present towards the

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Viscountess Iyeyasu, as soon as she appeared on the staircase. "It is only a question of dress!"

Yone Iyeyasu, however, was more a favourite because of her habit of listening to any and every man's stories about themselves, about their own interests and affairs, in a manner that made them believe she was deeply concerned. It was not diplomacy on her part, she really liked to hear, she took more interest in other people's affairs than in her own; as a matter of fact she would listen with equal attention to Niko Yamagata's account of his dogs and rat-traps, to Santo Munékito's regimental anecdotes and to old Mr. Yamagata's histories of his farming experiences; for, being a successful diplomat and State functionary, it is needless to say that Mr. Yamagata never spoke of anything to do with his work if he could help it, and prided himself on his prize pigs and cattle and

enormous lettuces, on his farm below Okodara, where he wasted many hundreds of yen yearly.

"Come to the fire, O'Yone-San," said Madame d'Yseulte, making room for her near it, "it is quite chilly to-night."

"Yes," said Mrs. Yamagata, "It is really cold; the autumn begins early in the hills of Japan—at least the evenings soon get cold, though daylight lasts so long."

Yone Iyeyasu came to the fire and seated herself in a big carved chair at one side of the great open hearth, up which a fire of pine-logs blazed far back under the hooded chimney.

"What will you take before you start, O'Yone-San?" called out Niko Yamagata from the table, "cherry brandy or chicken broth?"

Just then the butler came into the hall, carrying a big bouquet of white flowers, a

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veritable bride's bouquet of forced chrysanthemums, like feathery, fairy flowers, all white and of the rarest kinds.

"Who is that for?" asked Mrs. Yamagata, in Japanese, as the man came up. "How exquisite! who is it for?"

"It is from the Shira Hata, honourable madam," said the butler; "for the Viscountess Iyeyasu. The head gardener has just brought it over himself in a ricksha, in case it should be damaged on the way."

Yone Iyeyasu took the bouquet and looked at it with very mingled feelings; half in dismay. To carry this white haystack to the ball, was as good as declaring herself the Marquis's bride.

"A wedding bouquet," said Miss Coningsby, disagreeably; but Mrs. Yamagata looked at her, and she said no more.

Aoki Yamagata had been on the other side of the hall; now he walked up to Yone

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and taking the bouquet from her hands, threw it straight on to the blazing fire—without saying a word. There was a gasp of astonishment from the surrounding people.

“Aoki,” said his mother in Japanese, thoroughly amazed; “how could you do such a thing? Those flowers are almost priceless.”

“Probably they are,” said Aoki, coolly, “they are not for O’Yone-San.”

Yone herself said nothing; she had got up when Aoki came to her, and now stood, a slight, white figure against the black lacquer of the wall, watching the flowers curl and blacken in the flames.

“You will take flowers from no one but me,” said Aoki, in a low voice, and then walked away.

“But this is tyranny!” murmured Madame d’Yseulte, indignantly, “tiens ! mais c’est vraiment tragique !” and she

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looked forward with pleasure to the possible events of the evening.

Captain Saigo and Santo Munékito looked surprised ; it was unlike Yamagata to make a scene over anything, and now there might have been a distinct unpleasantness with any other woman ; but Aoki Yamagata knew Yone Iyeyasu too well to fear anything of the kind—she would make no scene, whatever happened. Now she was only a little pale, as she watched the flowers scorch away. She was rather glad Aoki had done it, in her private soul ; it relieved her of a difficulty, and, after this, whatever happened, no one could be astonished at whatever he made her do.

The carriage drove up to the door and in the bustle of putting on cloaks and coats, the bouquet was forgotten, or nearly so. The men of the party went on, mostly together in an omnibus. Yone went in a

brougham with old Mr. Bentinck and two of his daughters. The seven miles to Hakoné were soon covered and the lights of the little country village near the wharf gleamed brightly before them, under the stars.

The village was crowded to-night; this was the great social event of the year, carriages drove about the usually deserted road, and the yard and bar of the Fujiya Tea House were crowded with coachmen and rikshamen. The Marquis Karashi was one of the principal people at the Reception. He had been in the palace for some time when the party from Castle Okodara arrived; his heart sank and his hopes fell when he saw Yone Iyeyasu come in without his bouquet; perhaps some accident had happened to old Yasaki, perhaps it had never been delivered at Okodara; O'Chiyé-San also noticed its absence at once with her sharp eyes; she was sitting on the sofa of honour at the head of the room, on a dais

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built for the Princesses and other great ladies of the country round.

“I will find out the meaning of this,” thought O’Chiyé-San, in a business-like manner. “Karashi is too important a man for this minx to play fast and loose with. To-night it seems he is only good enough to play second to young Yamagata.”

And O’Chiyé looked angrily at “the minx,” who was passing down the room at the side of Aoki Yamagata, and looking like a girl of twenty.

Yone was fond of society and Aoki was always a pleasant companion. The Marquis Karashi did not care to enter into competition with any of these younger men. He was a gentleman, proud and self-conscious; he had never been in love before, and he thought he had never seen anyone so perfect as Yone Iyeyasu in her straight, rich white satin dress, “like a vision of sin, perhaps,” or of beauty unattainable. Why

had he buried himself at Shira Hata so much as he had, instead of mixing more with his equals in London and Paris? In which case he would have known the fashionable jargon she was no doubt accustomed to hear, and have chosen a present that might have pleased her better than the white flowers of Shira Hata. The Marquis felt depressed and miserable, but he did his duty in taking the Princess Kotchito in to supper, and that lady thought him much the same as usual.

At the Reception, Madame d'Yseulte had been by no means pleased with the condition of affairs; it was no concern of hers, she knew and admitted, but she felt an inclination to champion the Marquis Karashi's cause with Yone Iyeyasu, and she determined that, at least, he should know the fate of his flowers.

So when he came near the daïs where she was sitting, she beckoned him to her,

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and calmly asked him to take her to get some tea.

“I wish to have a little talk with you,” she said, as they went to the refreshment place, “on matters that will interest you immensely, I feel sure, so never mind about getting me any tea, but take me to some quiet corner where we can talk unobserved.”

He was surprised, and wondered what Madame d' Yseulte could possibly have to say to him, as he scarcely knew her, but he obediently conducted her to a corridor fitted up as a lounge, outside the great drawing-room and separated from it by a transparent wall of thick glass. Madame wasted no time in preliminaries but plunged into her subject at once.

“What a lovely bouquet you sent the Viscountess this evening!” she said; “it arrived when we were all together in the hall at Okodara.”

The Marquis looked the surprise he felt, at her mentioning the fact.

"I fear it was rather a clumsy affair," he said, "and, no doubt, too heavy to carry. I see the Viscountess has not brought it with her to-night."

"She could not do so, whether she wished to or not," said Madame d'Yseulte, abruptly.

"How do you mean, 'could not?' " said the Marquis, surprised.

"Because it was non-existent," said Madame. "Aoki Yamagata threw it into the hall fire before us all."

There was a pause. The Marquis Karashi was conscious of a distinct feeling of pleasure, that at least O'Yone-San herself had not despised his flowers, by voluntarily leaving them at home.

"This young man is a veritable tyrant," pursued Madame with gusto, wishing to rouse the Marquis into active warfare, "he does what he pleases with Yone Iyeyasu."

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"Probably they are engaged to each other," said the Marquis, coldly; he disliked speaking of Yone to a stranger.

Madamed'Ysuelte shrugged her shoulders.

"I think not," she said. "Yone Iyeyasu is older than he is, he is almost a boy—I do not think she would commit such a *bétise* as to marry him, but it is evident he has great power over her. A power of which he takes every advantage."

The Marquis was silent; he thought of O'Yone-San's tears in the garden that day, he thought of her curious compromise with himself—no doubt Aoki Yamagata was the obstacle that prevented her marrying another person.

"If I were a man," pursued Madame, "forgive me, Marquis, but I feel strongly on this matter—I would interfere. I would not be vanquished by a boy!"

"You speak in enigmas, Madame," said

the Marquis, coldly, startled and annoyed, but still polite.

"Forgive me," again said Madame d'Yseulte, gently, "I take a liberty, I know well, but I am a woman of the world, I have married daughters of my own, and I have an immense liking for Yone Iyeyasu—I should be sorry to see her life spoilt by this boy."

The Marquis drew himself up; his Japanese reserve could not brook discussion of what he held sacred.

"You mean well, no doubt, Madame," he said, stiffly, and rose up to offer her his arm, for other people were coming into the corridor from the dressing-rooms.

Madame felt quite satisfied, she had shot her bolt—and she felt very little doubt it had made a good deal of impression on the Marquis. She went back to the Reception-room on his arm, feeling sure he would think much over what she had said and that

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it would stir him up to effort of some kind.

It was after supper and nearly at the end of the evening, when O'Yone-San passed close to the Marquis on Mr. Bentinck's arm. He stepped forward, saying, "Am I too late to ask for some of your notice, O'Yone-San?"

"I am charmed to talk with you," she said eagerly, heedless of her present companion. "You may leave me now, Mr. Bentinck, you can leave me here," she added, to the old gentleman, who nodded and went away, leaving her with the Marquis Karashi.

"Let us find seats in the glass corridor," he said in Japanese.

He was resolved on getting an explanation at once. He took her to the same corner of the corridor where he had talked with Madame d'Yseulte—supper was going on and the corridor was deserted, save for

one distant couple, too absorbed in each other to notice the doings of outside people.

The Marquis and his companion sat down on a sofa and Yone fingered the little silk tassels on her fan nervously. What was coming now, she wondered?

"I have heard of the fate of my bouquet, O'Yone-San," said the Marquis, stiffly.

She, blushed but did not look up. Who could have told him?—one of the party, no doubt—but what an officious thing to do!

"Why do you put up with such treatment?" said the Marquis, sternly. "What hold has this boy over you, that he can behave in such an autocratic manner?"

Yone said nothing—what was the use? It was impossible to explain. Let the Marquis cast her off for ever, if he wished to!

"Is Aoki Yamagata the person who prevents your promising to marry me, O

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Yone-San ? ” said the Marquis. “ I think I am entitled to an answer—tell me at once, do you prefer this boy to me ? ”

“ I told you before,” she said, nervously, “ I would like to marry you, but I can’t.”

“ My dearest, why not ? ” said he, taking her little hand in his. “ I love you, O’Yone, with a love that will endure through my life. Is it not worthy of some consideration ? ”

Yone knew he was speaking from his heart, and she looked at him, wistfully. “ I know,” she said, “ you love me much more than I deserve, but I cannot marry you ; I am a stupid coward and I am afraid of Aoki—I cannot defy him, that is the truth, I do not dare. If I told him I would marry you instead of him, he would simply force me to marry him at once.”

“ Not if you gave me the right to protect you,” said the Marquis, angrily, “ you are talking nonsense, O’Yone-San.”

“ No, I am not ! ” she said, passionately.

“With another person it might be nonsense, but I am so weak-minded I cannot help it. Aoki Yamagata can make me do as he likes.”

“I wonder you like to say such an extraordinary thing,” said the Marquis, sternly, but she continued:—

“I am to leave Castle Okodara on Wednesday, and so does he—unless you marry me before then, you will never see me again.”

The Marquis's blood was up, the spirit of his fighting ancestors burnt in his veins. He would do it, he would marry her before Wednesday! She should not throw herself into his rival's arms.

“Will you marry me on Monday, O'Yone-San?” he said, in a matter-of-fact manner.

“How can I? How can you?” cried Yone, impatiently. “You cannot! To-day is Friday.

“I can and I will, love of my heart,” said the Marquis. “Promise me, on your

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honour, to keep faith with me, and I will arrange our marriage on Monday."

Yone Iyeyasu looked at him curiously. He seemed an altered man ; his face glowed with passion, his eyes shone with determination, and he straightened his shoulders.

"Very well, I promise," she said, "but how?"

"I will drive over for you to Okodara on Monday," he answered, "at eight o'clock in the morning, and ask for you openly at the door. Be ready for me, dearest, and trust the rest to me."

"Yes, I will," said Yone gently, and she meant it. She had not thought the Marquis would have the enterprise to do such a thing. It was the only way, if she really wished to marry him and not Aoki Yamagata. On Monday morning next, and this was Friday! But no doubt the Marquis could arrange it, she would be safe in his hands.

"Remember you are pledged to me now, O'Yone-San," he said, sternly.

"I will remember, I will be ready," she said; "but do not see me before then—do not come to Okodara before Monday. If you come then, at eight o'clock, I will be ready and will come away with you."

"It shall be as you wish, dearest," said the Marquis.

It was a curious way for a man of his position to get married in—no one knew that better than himself; but he cared little for public opinion. To do away with a conventional wedding, pleased him rather than otherwise; he loved Yone Iyeyasu with a madness and fervour that astonished himself, it sent the blood rushing from his heart to think that on Monday she would belong to him alone. As to her reasons for such curious arrangements, he did not care to look into them. No doubt, she was as she said, weak-minded and a coward, some

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women were so. Well! he preferred them weak-minded, she would have himself to lean on in future, and she might be as weak-minded as she liked. He disliked strong, determined females who were afraid of nothing.

Yone got up.

"Take me away," she said. "I must go back to Mrs. Yamagata." And the Marquis took her back to the great drawing-room.

"I may ask you to do curious things for me in the next few days, my sister," said the Marquis that evening.

"I will be ready to do them, whatever they may be," returned O'Chiyé-San, briskly.

CHAPTER X

THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM

Aoki Yamagata managed that he should sit next Yone on the drive home. She went back in the omnibus, not in the brougham, and he took his place beside her.

In the cover of the darkness, he put his arm round her under her cloak and drew her closely to his side.

Yone sat dreamily within the encircling arm—it would be quite impossible to get away from it if she wished to, with Miss Conyngsby sitting opposite and watching her every movement like a cat.

All went well till they were about half-way back from Lake Hakoné and then the horses shied violently at a stray dog lying right across the road, in the moonlight.

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The Japanese coachman, who was either half asleep or had been treating himself too well to saké at the Fujiya Tea house, was thrown off the box by the jerk, and the horses tore along the road, entirely uncontrolled. The omnibus rocked from side to side as they rushed along. Inside the consternation was great—fortunately only young people were in the omnibus, mostly girls, and four of the younger men, Captain Clarke, Captain Saigo, Mr. Furihata, and Aoki himself.

The latter was sitting at the end of the omnibus, nearest the horses, and he at once lowered the window at the back of the driving seat and looked out. The second man had fortunately caught the reins as the coachman fell; but he knew nothing of driving and was quite useless in the way of exercising control over the terrified horses.

“I must try to get through this window,” said Aoki. “I fancy I can get my

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shoulders through—sit still, all of you!—and don't attempt to jump out, whatever you do."

Miss Conyngsby had entirely lost control over herself, and was shrieking entreaties to be let out to Captain Clarke, who had firm hold of the door. The three Bentincks were frightened but fairly quiet, and so was Yone Iyeyasu, who did not seem to realise the danger they were in. Aoki Yamagata got upon the seat to try to force his way through the window. He pushed his head and shoulders out, breaking the upper half of the glass in order to do so—then he took the reins from the man's shaking hands, still standing on the seat inside. It was a very awkward position, as he could not get the free use of his arms; still by degrees his firm hold of the reins and the sound of his voice quieted the horses, and before long they subsided into a steady gallop. A long hill was in front, and at this Aoki sent

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them as fast as they wished to go, and they were well in hand before they reached the top.

Here he stopped them and brought the carriage to a standstill, and sent the useless man to the horses' heads. Then he screwed himself into the omnibus again.

Miss Conynsby recommenced screaming, much to his disgust, for the sleeves of his coat were in ribbons and covered with blood.

"Let me tie your arm up," said Yone Iyeyasu, very white—"it is bleeding dreadfully. Give me your handkerchief—mine is only a little lace thing."

"Here, I'll do it," said Captain Clarke; you're not fit to drive the horses any further, old chap, besides they'll be quiet enough now."

Mr. Furihata and Captain Saigo had got out as soon as the horses stopped, to see to them, and were now patting and soothing

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the poor creatures, who were trembling with fright and heat from the pace at which they had raced along. Then Mr. Furihata went back along the road to look for the coachman and find out if he were much hurt, and Captain Saigo got on the box-seat and drove on to Castle Okodara to get Aoki properly attended to, and to send help back for the coachman.

“There is nothing wrong with me!” said Aoki, and certainly no bones were broken; but he had lost a good deal of blood and was in considerable pain from the cuts on his arm. He was glad to lie back quietly in his corner by Yone. The others were full of praise of his pluck and strength in stopping the horses, and Yone sat quietly by him, holding his hand, and almost sorry her fate had not been decided for her by an accident.

“If I had broken my leg or anything like that,” she thought, “I could not have been

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married to either of them so soon as next week—" and added, "Dear Aoki, how brave and strong he is!"

"You kept quiet enough, Yone," he said, gently, in English; "were not you frightened?"

"Yes, I suppose I was," she replied, in a low voice. "I think what I was most afraid of, was the carriage turning over, with you in such an awkward position."

"By Jove, yes," said Aoki, "I should not have had half a chance if we had turned over."

"And you can talk of it so coolly!" cried Miss Conynsby. "I shall not be able to sleep for weeks to come, thinking of your danger. I was never so frightened in my life."

Captain Clarke laughed.

"I don't think you troubled yourself much about Yamagata's danger, Miss Conynsby," he said, "you were so much occupied in

trying to jump out. I made my arms ache, I know, trying to prevent you."

Everybody laughed, except Julia Conyngsby herself, who was very angry.

"Horrid, unfeeling wretch!" she thought, of the offending Engineer, no more to be cherished by her.

The omnibus arrived at Castle Okodara without any further mishap. Yone Iyeyasu was a ghastly object to behold as she came into the light of the hall-lamps, her white satin dress was a mass of blood-stains; it was patent to the world that Aoki Yamagata's wounded arms had been unconventionally close to her. Yone looked at the stains and shuddered, yet surely Aoki deserved every kindness after saving all their lives by his pluck and presence of mind!

"I'm afraid I've spoilt your frock, O'Yone-San," he said, as he gave her her bedroom candlestick.

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“Never mind,” said Yone, “a new frock is easily got ; I am only glad you were not hurt more.”

She was the last lady to go up the stairs and Captain Clarke had obligingly and considerately turned his back on them—he was the only other person then in the hall, the other men having gone to see about bringing in the coachman, who had to be looked for along the road.

Aoki looked round first and then drew Yone to him, and kissed her quickly and longingly.

“My own darling !” he said, “I should have never forgiven myself if harm had come to you. Good-night !”

Yone Iyeyasu went upstairs, her heart beating wildly against her blood-stained bodice. Was ever woman so plagued ? Which did she love best ? The Marquis Karashi, or Aoki Yamagata ? At that moment, Aoki, most decidedly !

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The next morning, everybody came down very late after the double excitement of the reception and the accident. The coachman was going on well, he had only been thoroughly shaken, but he was too feverish for Mr. Yamagata to abuse, as the master of the house would have liked to relieve his mind by doing.

Yone's re-action of feeling in favour of Aoki continued, but still she did nothing to prevent the Marquis from coming to fetch her, on the Monday morning.

Indeed it was characteristic of her that she made no plans and no preparations of any kind, as regarded her own part in the events of the next coming week. Fate must decide her future, she herself would do nothing either way ; neither on Saturday afternoon nor even on the Sunday, did she make the smallest arrangement about packing her things or give orders of any kind to Margaret about them. She went

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for a long walk on Sunday with a Miss Ronald, who had arrived at Okodara two days before, a great walker and a most pleasant companion.

Miss Ronald was over fifty and had left the vanities of youth far behind her. She was a great favourite, and for genial, wholesome companionship had no rival in the many houses, both at home and abroad, in which she was a welcome guest. Yone Iyeyasu and she started out together, in short skirts and provided with packets of sandwiches, early in the day, and did not re-appear till tea-time. They spent a delightful day on the rough hills that stretched away to the northern sea.

Yone had thought of confiding her troubles to this shrewd and unbiased companion; but after all she was afraid to do so—she feared Miss Ronald would have no patience with such incomprehensible dealings and so she kept her confidences to herself.

She listened instead to Miss Ronald's talk of many countries where she had lived, for she was a great traveller, and had spent many years in China with her brother, who was head of a great banking house in Shanghai. Another brother was a judge in Australia and she had also paid visits to him.

"It is quite a relief to spend a day with a nice, sensible woman," Yone said at last, "and not to even see a man!"

"I should not have thought that you, of all people, objected to the society of men," answered Miss Ronald, amused; they were sitting on some grey rocks, discussing their sandwiches, about two o'clock.

"I should be very glad to see no man for the next five years," said Yone, fervently, "except Ito, of course."

Miss Ronald ate a sandwich thoughtfully.

"We all have our troubles and difficulties, I suppose," she said, irrelevantly; "but

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with most of us, it is not at least from an "embarras de richesses" in the way of men's affections."

Yone Iyeyasu looked up, but there was no smile on her face—what was merely a joke to Miss Ronald was no joke to her, but a very serious matter.

"I do not seek their attentions!" she said, proudly. "I do not even desire them."

"That is precisely the reason why you have them," said Miss Ronald. "The women who seek, do not find."

"What would she say if she knew one man had arranged to marry me on Monday, and another on Thursday?" thought Yone, bitterly. "Shall I tell her? No! she will think me mad."

So she did not say any more to Miss Ronald on the subject of men, though it would have been an immense relief to have unburdened her mind to some sensible person. She wondered idly, looking out

over the pine-clad hills, if the Marquis Karashi would really call for her the next morning, at eight o'clock. It all seemed so unreal! It was very shabby behaviour on her part towards Aoki Yamagata, to go away with the Marquis, but it would be better for him in the end that she should do so. . . . Still, how straight, how strong, how masterful, her younger lover was! . . . How furious he would be when he found she had escaped him!

Yone Iyeyasu gave an involuntary gasp of pain and tore up a small plant beside her in the misery and disgust she felt. Miss Ronald looked up anxiously.

"What is it?" she said.

"Oh, nothing!" said Yone, impatiently; "nothing! only I am a fool; how great a fool you can hardly imagine—you, a sensible woman."

"To be conscious of folly is a step on the way to wisdom!" said Miss Ronald, kindly.

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"We are all fools; some more so than others, some less."

"I am very much more," said Yone.

"I should have thought you had a very good background of common-sense, from my observation of you," said Miss Ronald.

Yone shook her head.

"No," she said, "you are wrong—I am a fool. I do not mean to do wrong, and yet I seem forced to do it."

"There is always a right and a wrong side to every question," said Miss Ronald.

"Do right, though it may be unpleasant:"

"That sounds easy enough," said Yone, bitterly, "but it is not always so easy to know which is the right."

Miss Ronald looked at her searchingly, but did not question her. If the Viscountess Iyeyasu wished to confide in her she could do so, but she would not force her confidence.

"It is a question of her marrying young Yamagata, of course," Miss Ronald reflected

to herself. "Well! there is no special harm in it, if she decides to do so, though the difference of age is on the wrong side."

"It is best not to worry one's mind too much," said Miss Ronald, sensibly; "things often arrange themselves better than one could suppose."

"That's just it," said Yone, eagerly, "they arrange themselves! One gets sick of arguing perpetually over right and wrong."

Miss Ronald looked out far away over the hills.

"If I could help you, my dear, I would;" she said, simply.

"I am sure you would," said Yone, "you look so kind—you have such a nice face! But no one can help me, Miss Ronald, now, but myself—only myself."

"Let's go on," she said, jumping up and shaking herself brightly; "what a stupid

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companion I am ! Let us forget everything but that it is a lovely summer's day."

"Your troubles cannot amount to much, if you can so easily forget them," said Miss Ronald, smiling, but scarcely understanding the versatility of such a childish character.

For Yone did as she proposed, and put all unpleasant thoughts behind her, and for the rest of the day no shadow of unhappiness clouded the enjoyment of their outing, nor affected the gaiety of her conversation.

They got back to Castle Okodara at tea-time, and found all the others fully occupied with their own affairs. Aoki Yamagata had gone down to the samurai's cottage with his father, to inspect some newly-arrived puppies ; the rest of the party were scattered about in twos and twos. Yone had her tea with Mrs. Bentinck and listened to that lady's rambling conversation for a long time—conversation which de-

generated into a mere recital, on Mrs. Bentinck's part, of the perfections and good qualities of her three daughters.

They all went to bed early that night—they all felt tired after the dissipations of the week. Yone Iyeyasu remembered to tell Margaret, when she was going to bed, that she must be called very early the next morning—at half-past six o'clock.

"Be sure you are no later than that, Margaret," she said, anxiously, "it is very important I should be dressed and ready early to-morrow. Be sure to bring me my tea and toast at half-past six exactly."

"Very well, ma'am," said Margaret, who objected to Japanese titles and always addressed her mistress as "ma'am"—"but you'll overdo yourself, ma'am, if you don't take care—you've been for a long walk to-day, and I hope you are not going to be out all day to-morrow as well. It's too much for you."

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“ I am going out early, at any rate,” said Yone. “ It is no hardship to do so in this lovely weather, or for you to get up to call me, Margaret.”

“ I never said it was, ma'am,” said Margaret, with dignity. “ It was not my own comfort I was seeking.”

Then Yone Iyeyasu went to bed and to sleep, with the unconcern of a person who has done all that could be expected of her.

CHAPTER XI

DECIDED

The next morning Yone was awakened by the entrance of Margaret into her room, carrying a neat little tray, on which stood a boiled egg, as well as the tea and toast she had ordered.

“I thought you had better have something solid, ma’am,” said Margaret, as she settled the tray in front of her mistress; “as you said you were going out before breakfast—so I made bold to ask the cook to boil an egg for you.”

“Thank you, Margaret, said Yone, jumping up in bed, and bundling her pillows together to make a support for her back: “I shall like an egg very much.”

“It’s a lovely day, ma’am,” said Margaret,

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drawing back the curtains and letting the early morning sun stream into the room ; " there's a good deal of mist about yet, but I expect that will clear off, as the sun gets higher."

Yone Iyeyasu ate her breakfast thoughtfully. If the Marquis Karashi kept to his word, this was her wedding day ! In another hour and a half, or before that, even, he would be here to fetch her. She cracked her egg with a mind occupied very seriously indeed. What should she do about her clothes ? She could not give even a hint to Margaret, or it might penetrate all over the house before breakfast. Also what if the Marquis never come at all ?

"What will you please to wear to-day, ma'am ?" said Margaret, going to the wardrobe.

"My dove-coloured cloth," said Yone, "and grey chiffon toque."

Margaret looked surprised.

"You will be cold in this dress so early in the day, ma'am," she permitted herself to say, as she took it out of the wardrobe, and shook out the folds.

"I am going to lunch at Shira Hata," said Yone, nervously, "so I must be properly dressed. I shall wear my grey-fox coat over it to drive there. The Marquis Karashi's sister said she would send the carriage about eight o'clock."

Margaret said nothing, though she thought it a curious arrangement. Still there was no possible reason why the Viscountess Iyeyasu should not spend a long day at Shira Hata, if she wished to do so; so Margaret put out in readiness her grey suède gloves, grey silk stockings and everything necessary for a careful toilette.

The unreal feeling was still upon Yone as she got up and dressed. She had heard or seen nothing of the Marquis Karashi since the Friday night; perhaps he had

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changed his mind; perhaps O'Chiyé-San had put her foot down and prevented his making arrangements for such a hasty marriage. Still she herself had promised to be ready at eight o'clock, and she must fulfil her part of the bargain. If he did not come, things would be as they were before. She felt little or no excitement and was even surprised at her own unconcern. She was dressed and quite ready at half past seven o'clock, but she told Margaret to wait in her room till the carriage came for her.

"I must write to Aoki Yamagata, I suppose," she said to herself; "it would be really too mean of me to disappear and say nothing: he will be dreadfully angry—he must not have the letter till ten o'clock at the earliest, or he will drive after me and there will be a scene."

She sat down in front of the writing-table, with its elaborate silver furnishings, and

took a sheet of writing-paper out of the case standing there.

"I wonder if I shall ever use the Okodara writing-paper again?" she thought, as she looked curiously at it.

"You will tell Mrs. Yamagata's woman, Margaret," she said, "that the sister of the Marquis sent for me to spend a long day at Shira Hata; ask her to tell Mrs. Yamagata so, with my love. Tell her this about breakfast-time."

"Yes, ma'am," said Margaret, stolidly.

"What shall I say to Aoki Yamagata?" thought Yone; "the least possible, is the best. He will not forgive me, whatever I say." So she wrote:—

"You will be very angry with me, Aoki, but what I am doing is really best for you, and one day you will be glad of it. I am much older than you, and every year the difference between us would have seemed greater, between your age and mine. When

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you get this letter, I shall be married to the Marquis Karashi. You will not forgive me, you will be furious with me—I cannot expect you to be otherwise. I have only told your mother that I am spending the day at Shira Hata.

“Yone Iyeyasu.”

She read this letter over and sighed.

“It is stupid, but it must do,” she thought; “there is nothing else for me to say—it makes no difference how I say it—he will hate me, in any case.”

There was a sound of wheels on the gravel outside, and Margaret looked out of the window.

“It is the Marquis himself, ma’am,” she said, “in his American carriage, as he drove in last week to the garden party.”

“Very well, Margaret,” said Yone, getting up and putting the note she had written into an envelope. “Give this note to Captain Yamagata yourself, about ten

o'clock; be sure he does not get it before then."

"Yes, ma'am," said Margaret, taking the letter from her.

"I trust to you for this, Margaret," said O'Yone-San, nervously. "It is important that Captain Yamagata should not get this letter before ten o'clock."

"I will see he does not, ma'am," said Margaret, stiffly.

Yone felt it necessary in some way to explain.

"Captain Yamagata does not like my going to the Marquis Karashi's house, Margaret," she said, "and he is so impetuous, he might make a fuss, if he heard of it before I had got there, so be careful he does not get that note too soon."

"Would it not be better to leave no letter at all, ma'am?" said Margaret.

"No, no—I must write and tell him where I have gone," said Yone, hurriedly,

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"only remember, I rely on you, Margaret."

"It will be all right, ma'am," said Margaret, holding her mistress's splendid grey-fox driving coat for her to put on. Just then a knock came at the door, and the servant said, in Japanese, when Margaret opened it—"The Marquis Karashi has called for the Viscountess Iyeyasu," and Yone went down the great staircase, through the hall, and out on to the entrance steps, before which the Marquis stood by the side of his horses.

What miseries he had undergone during the few minutes his buggy had been standing before that door! Years of anxiety seemed to him to be compressed into that short time! Would O'Yone-San be faithful to her promise, or would she not? Would she keep faith with him, or had Aoki Yamagata subdued her will to his again? He had had two whole days to do it in.

The Marquis knew nothing of the very definite nature of Aoki's arrangements, nor of how far things were settled between him and Yone, or he would not have been there that morning. It would have been contrary to his code of honour to steal another man's bride. Yone knew this, but Yone's code of honour was a very elastic measure sometimes.

The Marquis heard her coming now across the hall, and turned to the door. Here she came . . . his love, his almost wife! . . . her blue eyes like the dawn of day, her face dimpling with excitement.

"Good-morning, Marquis," she said, demurely. He raised his hat simply, his feelings were beyond common civilities of expression, and in silence he and the manservant helped her into the carriage.

He got up beside her and they were off; through the delicate grey films of the morning mist, across the Park, across

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the Hayagawa, on the road to Shira Hata. Then at last he turned to her and spoke.

"I suffered agonies on that door-step, O'Yone-San," he said, as he heaved a great sigh of relief, and looked down on her from his high driving seat.

Yone laughed gaily. The die was cast now—she was prepared to enjoy the excitement of the adventure.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

"To my private Shinto Chapel," said the Marquis, gravely. You doubtless know that, like the Emperor, I keep to the most pure and ancient forms of the Shinto religion. My sister is already there at the chapel, waiting for you."

Yone Iyeyasu was silent. This was even more settled than she had thought possible; there could be no drawing back now on her side. However had the Marquis persuaded the stiff O'Chiyé-San to give the sanction

of her presence to such irregular proceedings? It had been easy, no doubt, for him to arrange about the legality of the marriage, as it was to take place in his private chapel.

The Marquis drove fast, his horses were in splendid condition; in not much more than half an hour they were at the chapel-gates. The Shinto religion enjoins purity, whiteness and simplicity, white robes, white woods—no gorgeous ceremonies. The priest and O'Chiyé-San awaited them in the chapel and the simple ceremony was quickly over, and then Yone Jessamine Iyeyasu signed her name in that way for the last time, in the register. The Marquis signed his after hers, and Yone read, with a kind of amusement, the long string of Japanese names and titles under her own name. A legal dignitary from Tokio superintended the signing and completed all the legalities of the civil marriage.

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"Let me offer you my congratulations, Marchioness Karashi," said the old Counsellor, when all was complete.

Yone recognised her new name with a start of surprise and a frightened look at the Marquis.

He put her hand on his arm, saying in Japanese—

"My wife is still rather astonished by the new state of affairs, most honourable Counsellor. She will hope to make your better acquaintance later, at Tokio." He was afraid of her breaking down in some way, so he took her out as quickly as possible into the bright sunshine outside.

O'Chiyé-San had driven down to the Shinto Chapel in a brougham, and this was waiting outside, behind the buggy. The servants with the carriages bowed low as the Marquis and his wife approached ; they were quite well aware of what had happened, indeed the attendant with the brougham

had been an interested spectator of the ceremony. No hint had been given at Shira Hata of what was to take place, in case any hitch might occur at the last moment.

The Marquis assisted his wife into the carriage and drove rapidly away to Shira Hata. He said very little during the drive, but he checked the horses for a moment at a rise in the ground, from where the huge pile of buildings was seen in its entirety.

"I hope you may find it a happy home, O'Yone-Karashi," he said.

Yone looked at it, half curiously.

"What a big place it is," she said, in English, "I can't realise it is to be my home yet—you must be patient with me—you don't know how curious I feel!"

The Marquis laughed.

"Do not you think you might begin calling me 'Karashi,' darling?" he said.
"You are married now, you know."

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At the great doors all was still, and the groom had rung the bell quite three minutes before the old butler appeared, looking very much astonished at seeing a visitor so early in the morning.

The Marquis had got down from the carriage and was standing on the steps.

"This is the Marchioness Karashi, Hashimoto," he said, with boyish amusement at the surprise of his old Master of the Household.

Old Hashimoto nearly fell over in his astonishment and stared at Yone with open eyes, as she nodded brightly at him.

"I wish you joy, honourable lady," he said, recovering himself, and hastened forward to assist in any way he could. But the Marquis lifted her down himself and took her into the house.

"What's the meaning of this?" said Hashimoto, in Japanese, to the groom, to

whom, as a rule, he did not condescend to address himself.

"The meaning is, the Marquis was married to-day at the Shinto Chapel," said Hira, the groom, with pride in his position as one of the principal actors in this romance.

"Whatever will O'Chiyé-San say to such doings?" said Hashimoto, uplifting his hands. "The honourable lady is but a foreigner, and no pure Japanese."

"O'Chiyé-San was there in the chapel," said Hira, "and here comes now the brougham containing her, so I go, O'Hashimoto, to my stables, out of the way."

Old Hashimoto stood on the steps and waited for O'Chiyé-San's carriage to come up to the door. She had been his mistress for many years. What would happen to her now? old Hashimoto wondered. Would she go to the Dower House? If so, would he go with her? Perhaps the young

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Marchioness would not like the old Japanese servants. Englishmen or other foreigners might be preferred. Hashimoto felt aggrieved at this marriage having taken place without his knowledge and approval. The honourable O'Chiyé-San might have given so old a retainer a hint, he thought, as he stood waiting for the brougham to arrive at the steps.

O'Chiyé-San got out of the carriage, not looking depressed at all, but brisk and lively as usual.

"The Marquis and his most honourable wife have gone into the house, O'Chiyé-San," said Hashimoto, in a solemn voice.

„Yes," said O'Chiyé-San, "so I suppose; send in a wedding-feast as soon as possible, Hashimoto, to the garden parlour."

"Not even a wedding-cake is made, O'Chiyé-San," sighed old Hashimoto, as he took the rug indoors, and he positively

groaned, in a shocked manner. "No ships of happiness, no sacred symbols are in readiness."

"It cannot be helped now. O'Hashimoto," said his mistress. "As long as the Marquis is happy, all else matters little; but let O'Yei Osuka do her best for the mid-day meal, short as the notice is."

Meanwhile the Marquis had taken his wife into the library, and shutting the door, took her into his arms, and kissed her passionately. He had never kissed her before, and but rarely any woman. It was a foreign custom, but one not altogether to be deplored.

"My wife!" he said, "my dearest love."

Yone accepted his love in a half alarmed manner; she had always liked the Marquis, but it was not in her coldly-vestal nature to care in a sensual way for any man, and in this half-shrinking attitude of hers to men lay, perhaps, one of her greatest charms.

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Now she accepted her newly-made husband's kisses ; though she did not return them, yet she did not object to them, and she felt almost pleased her hesitation must finally be over, for she was now married for good and all,

"What would you like to do, darling?" said the Marquis, at last, still holding her very close to him. "I mean about going away for our honeymoon in the European manner. I believe it is the custom to go somewhere, but I made no plans, for I did not know what you might wish. For myself, I prefer remaining at home."

"Then let us do so," said Yone, "I would rather stay here than travel about. People often go straight to their own homes now, even in Europe."

"I would much prefer staying here," said the Marquis, who, like most shy men, detested leaving home ; "we will settle it so, then, darling, and when the weather

gets disagreeable here, we will go to San Francisco or anywhere you like."

"That will be delightful," said Yone, shyly, "and to-day, about my clothes and things — how shall I get them from Okodara?"

"I will see about that, after breakfast," said the Marquis; "you should also write to Mrs. Yamagata. But now I think it is quite time you had some breakfast, O'Yone. You must want it; I do, I know."

"So do I," said Yone, laughing, "I am ravenous."

The Marquis rang a bell and ordered breakfast at once; five minutes afterwards, the gong sounded, and they left the library and crossed the hall to the garden parlour. O'Yei Osuka had done her best to provide a substitute for a wedding-feast, in the very short time given her and so had old Yasaki the gardener—the table was a mass of white flowers, with dainties of every kind crowded

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in between. O'Chiyé-San was standing near the window and half apologised for the appearance of the table.

"I am afraid it looks rather like a child's name day party," she said.

"It is charmingly done," said Yone gaily, "who did it—the housekeeper? I must see her and thank her after breakfast."

"Hira Yasaki had a hand in it too," said O'Chiyé-San, in Japanese, as she seated herself at the side of the table, leaving the head, where she had hitherto sat, for Yone, who took her place, rather nervously, opposite her husband.

"Hira Yasaki is an old friend of yours, O'Yone," he said. "You remember the old gardener who gave you those white chrysanthemums?"

"Oh yes," said Yone, "of course I do—when we all came over to lunch."

"We must have some white wine," said the Marquis, "to drink your health in,

O'Yone," and he sent old Hashimoto away to fetch some.

"When do you leave Shira Hata, O my brother?" said O'Chiyé-San, later on.

"Not at all at present," he answered. "Yone prefers remaining here, and so do I."

"We are quite agreed on the subject, are we not, O'Yone?" he added, to her.

"I would much rather stay here myself," said Yone; "no place could be so lovely as this is, in the early autumn."

"I am glad you like Shira Hata so well," said O'Chiyé-San, pleased. "Still, the English and other foreigners usually do go away for a journey after marriage, I have heard. It seems to me a most curious and unnecessary custom,"

"I do not see why we should leave a comfortable house," said the Marquis, "merely because Europeans choose to do so, especially when both Yone and I prefer remaining where we are."

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“Very well,” said O’Chiyé-San, “then it is settled you stay at Shira Hata. I had ordered rooms to be prepared for you,” she added, turning to Yone, “though I did not know what your plans might be. They are the principal rooms in the house and have always been used by the mistress of it, the wife of its Lord.”

“My mother’s rooms,” said the Marquis ; “but my sister occupies them every year for the space of a month, so they are not in a state of discomfort.”

“I should not have dreamt of putting your wife into them, if they had been so, Karashi,” said O’Chiyé-San, her housekeeping instincts offended; “and now, the sooner I make arrangements for moving to the Dower House the better !”

“Indeed, no !” cried Yone, “it would be absurd for you to go there, O’Chiyé-San. Surely there is room for both you and me in this huge house.”

"Only a month ago we had never heard of her," thought O'Chiyé-San, bitterly, "and now I have to wait her permission to stay in my own home."

"Dear O'Chiyé-San," continued Yone, "I see no reason why you should go at all ; but if you insist on going sometime, please do not now, or I shall feel most uncomfortable, with no one to speak to."

"You have your husband," said O'Chiyé-San, stiffly, and Yone blushed.

"Oh, Karashi," she said. "I did not think of him—but anyhow he is not a woman to talk to."

"Oh, stay, O'Chiyé-San," said the Marquis impatiently, "what a tumult about nothing! Besides I shall probably soon leave Japan for England, and then you will be wanted at Shira Hata in my stead."

"So be it, then—I will remain," said O'Chiyé-San, in the tone of one granting a favour.

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"Now let us drink our own healths," said Yone, gaily, "and also that of O'Chiyé-San."

The Marquis opened the wine and filled three glasses.

"I drink to your health and happiness, O'Yone Karashi," he said, gravely.

"Your very good health," said Yone to the other two, with a quaint little bow to each.

"No one can wish you both good luck more sincerely than I do," said O'Chiyé-San, stiffly, in her native tongue.

"Thank you, my sister," said the Marquis, and Yone looked at her gratefully. She felt for the quaint, stiff old lady she had supplanted.

"When you have quite finished your repast," said O'Chiyé-San, later, "I will ring for O'Yei Osuka to show O'Yone-San her rooms."

"I will show them to her myself," said the Marquis.

"O'Yei Osuka is very anxious to do so," said O'Chiyé San.

"I think I would rather she did, Karashi," said Yone, blushing hotly; the idea of the Marquis in the light of a husband was very embarrassing.

He looked at her but said nothing; it dawned on Yone that he might show more character as her master than she expected.

O'Chiyé San rang a bell and sent for O'Yei Osuka, the housekeeper, who soon appeared, arrayed in her best dark grey silk kimono, and with an air of suppressed excitement.

"This is your honourable master's wife, O'Yei Osuka," said O'Chiyé San, and added, to Yone—"She has spent her life in the service of our family; we look on her as a friend."

Yone went up to the old woman and took her hand, as she stood by the door.

"I must thank you for preparing such a

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nice wedding-feast for the Marquis and myself," she said, in Japanese.

"Oh, Honourable Lady, it was nothing fit for the occasion!" gasped old O'Yei Osuka. "If I had only been told but two days ago, things would have looked very different, most honoured one."

"They were very nice as it was," said Yone, with her kindly smile.

"O'Yone Karashi wishes to see her rooms," said O'Chiyé San, shortly, "can you show them to her now?"

"Certainly?" said O'Yei Osuka, recalled from sentiment to business at once.

"You may come too, if you like," said Yone shyly, in passing the Marquis to leave the room.

He came at once: Yone would have been much more at her ease if he had remained downstairs.

They went together up the staircase, with its quaint balustrade of black wood, carved

to represent a vine with huge bunches of grapes, and figures of men in armour at the corners of each landing, also carved in wood and standing on pedestals on the top of the balustrade.

“Daimyos, O most honourable,” said O’Yei Osuka, pointing them out.

The great bedroom, into which she ushered them, was a paradise of soft, rich Kioto silk and ancient lacquer—the walls were mostly of lacquer, with golden, life-sized rabbits and chrysanthemums scattered over them. The great bed had white silk hangings covered with rose-coloured cranes, for happiness.

Yone went up to the windows; there were two large ones with deep, cushioned seats round them, looking straight away to the snow-topped mountain of Fujiyama. The Marquis followed her to the window.

“We thank you, O’Yei Osuka, you can

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now leave us," said the Marquis, "I will show O'Yone-Karashi the rest of her rooms myself."

CHAPTER XII

THE ONE LEFT

Aoki Yamagata had heard nothing of the carriage from Shira Hata driving up to the house in the early morning ; his room looked out to another side, but had he heard it, he would have paid no attention to it, probably, though it was an unusual occurrence, as no one but the nobility drive horses in Japan, as a rule, and certainly no one else does in country places.

It was late for Aoki Yamagata to go down to breakfast, for he was an active-minded young man. He was just about to open the door of his room, when somebody knocked ; and opening it suddenly he found Margaret, O'Yone-San's maid, standing outside with a note for him in her hand.

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"Hullo, Margaret, you there?" he said, pleasantly, "what's the matter?"

"My mistress told me to give you this note, Sir," said Margaret.

"Here, wait a minute," said Aoki, as he took it, "there may be an answer."

He tore it open and read it; he straightened himself, and read it again.

"What do you know of this?" he said, angrily, to Margaret.

"The Marquis's sister sent for the Viscountess early this morning, Sir, to spend the day at Shira Hata," said Margaret.

Captain Yamagata had given her many presents, and she liked him for himself as well—all the servants did—but she was also not a little afraid of him. Aoki laughed scornfully, but remembered himself in time.

"All right, you can go," he said. "Stay!—at what time did she start?"

"At eight o'clock, Sir," said Margaret.

He shut the door and sat down by the

dressing-table, his head on his hands, and Yone Iyeyasu's letter spread out before him.

"So she has escaped me after all," he thought, savagely. "I would not have believed it of Yone! And to marry the Marquis! Good Heavens! has she no conscience?"

He shook with rage.

"I loved her," he said to himself, in his native language, "and I swear she loved me. Yet she marries Karashi and casts me off like an old shoe! She cares nothing for him and yet she marries him, not me, damn her! Damn all women! I will go after them and shoot him like a dog!" Yet in his own mind he knew he must submit to what had already happened; he could not create a scandal without making himself ridiculous.

Instead of going down to breakfast, he went out on to the hills, alone with his anger and disgust.

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He read the letter again, lying on the green turf, hot with the noonday sun.

"She has told my mother she has gone to Shira Hata for the day only," he thought, "they will know no different at the Castle till the evening, probably. I'll go back there and pack up my things and be off somewhere, anywhere!—to the devil! Thank goodness, no one knows I was going to marry her on Thursday! I would never have believed Yone would have cheated me so!"

He threw himself back on the springy turf and thought of the graceful delicate figure and face he had so loved, of the blue eyes with their inside shadows and sweet, half-shrinking looks, the red-gold hair that crinkled so prettily over the little ears!

"There is no one like her in all the world," he groaned. "O'Yone, my darling, my heart's desire!"

The bees hummed by in the drowsy air, the wild birds cried over the hills. The

young-man, in the passion of his first great disappointment, made an incongruous picture, lying prone on the mossy ground, in the midst of that splendid stretch of life and light, his face hidden in an agony of despair.

"I loved her, how I loved her," he repeated to himself, "my blue-eyed darling!"

Aoki Yamagata was a healthy, well-developed young man, and the pangs of hunger began to make themselves felt, before many hours had passed by. At last he got up and stretched his arms, and a wave of anger at his folly rushed over his mind.

"Why should I make such an idiot of myself over a woman who has treated me as damned badly as she has done?" he thought scornfully, as he strode back to Okodara.

He found Okodara peaceful as usual, no excitement whatever seemed in the air; it was just three o'clock and lunch was over.

Aoki went in by a side door, rang his

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room-bell for a man-servant, and gave his orders to pack up his things for a journey.

"For a few days only, honourable Sir?" asked the footman, "or am I to put in all the honourable gentleman's clothing?"

His own man was in the lodgings in Tokio, waiting for the wedding which would not now take place. What a farce the whole thing was! Aoki kicked an unoffending pair of boots that lay in his way, viciously across the room.

"Pack everything I have without exception," he said. "I am leaving by the train from Kodzu to-night."

Then he went down to the dining-room and made a very good meal, all things considered; but in this prosaic world one must eat, whatever happens; when one's best and dearest lie ill and suffering, when one's heart's delight decamps with another lover, food at intervals is an uninteresting but necessary detail.

After lunch Aoki felt better.

"I suppose she must let people know what has happened some time to-day," he thought; "but she evidently means to keep it dark as long as possible, excepting for me. I suppose she wanted to give me a chance of getting off, before it was public property."

Aoki had a good opinion of himself; the way in which he had been brought up almost obliged him to think himself an exceptional personage, and a feeling almost of pity for Yone Iyeyasu began to force itself on his mind.

"Poor little thing," he thought, "I expect she is precious miserable all the same. She can't care for Karashi!" and with this soothing reflection, he went to look for his mother and tell her of his approaching departure. He found Mrs. Yamagata in her own sitting-room, writing letters, and for a wonder quite alone. She uttered an exclamation of pleasure when she saw her son, though she

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noticed at once, with a mother's observant glance, that something had gone very wrong with him.

"What is it dear?" she said, in Japanese, anxiously. "Why were you not at breakfast? I wondered what had become of you."

Aoki felt soothed. Here was somebody who loved him, at least.

"It's all right, O my mother," he said. "Fitz Hugh has asked me to join him in Hakodate, to shoot bears further north, where he has a sort of shooting cottage, and I have made up my mind to go. I was busy getting my things together. I start by the train from Kodzu to-night."

"Hakodate? To-day!" gasped Mrs. Yamagata, "your going will spoil our party here entirely, dearest son."

"I am sorry, mother," said Aoki, "but I must go. I cannot stay here."

Mrs. Yamagata ran over possible reasons in her mind, in a puzzled manner.

"What can have happened?" she thought.

He looked stolidly out of the window.

"I may as well tell her now," he thought.
"she is sure to hear it sometime to-day."

"Yone Iyeyasu was married to the Marquis Karashi this morning," he said.
"At least she left here with him at eight o'clock, intending to be married to-day."

Mrs. Yamagata gazed at him unbelievably.

"O'Yone-San married to-day! O Aoki! you dream!" she said.

Then she added softly, "My poor boy!"
She remembered the affair of the burnt chrysanthemums.

Aoki made no further remark, except to say—

"You see I must get away from here, Mother."

"My darling boy," cried his mother, with ready sympathy, "but she was not worth

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your caring for her! How deceitful she must be to creep away in this manner!"

"Do not say anything against Yone Iyeyasu, Mother," said Aoki, loyally, "I cannot stand it! Besides there was no 'creeping' about the matter—she simply, drove off to Shira Hata. No doubt you will hear from her soon."

"It is most extraordinary behaviour on her part!" said Mrs. Yamagata, severely. Then her thoughts returned to her son. How—how could any woman in the world slight this precious son?

"There are many other women more worthy of your regard, my dear," she remarked, "though I fear that is little consolation to you at present."

"No, it is not," said Aoki, grimly. "However, you must see, Mother, I cannot stay here and listen to the fools staying in the house discussing her. I have shown my feelings about her very plainly."

"No, dear, you must go, I see," said his mother, hurriedly, "but how can you go straight off to Hakodate at once?"

"I go to Tokio to-day," said Aoki, "and to Hakodate in a day or two. Fitz Hugh's yacht is lying up there."

"It is all very annoying," said Mrs. Yamagata, in a worried way, "what could have possessed Yone Iyeyasu to do such a remarkable thing?"

But Aoki discussed the matter no further, indeed it was nearly time for him to drive to the station, if he wished to catch the mail train to Tokio. He went away to finish his preparations, and Mrs. Yamagata sat and reflected. She was not wholly displeased after all—evidently Aoki's intentions had been serious enough as regarded O'Yone-San, and though Mrs. Yamagata liked her well enough as a friend, she preferred her son should not marry at all at present, and then not a widow, but some

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nice girl, a kind of *rara avis* she would have a hand in choosing herself. It was much better Yone Iyeyasu should marry the Marquis Karashi, but why this extraordinary haste ? ”

“ I must go and see the dear boy has everything he requires,” Mrs. Yamagata said to herself, and hurried off to her son’s room, with a satisfaction she could not help, though she felt it selfish, that no daughter-in-law would yet have a right to interfere with his arrangements. No, his comfort still depended on her, his mother !

About 5 o’clock two jinrickshas came over from Shira Hata and the men with them brought two notes, one for Mrs. Yamagata and the other for Margaret.

Mrs. Yamagata read hers with no astonishment, as she was already aware of the news it contained ; then she sent her maid to ask Madame d’Yseulte if she would have tea with her in her own room.

When the tea and also Madame had arrived, Mrs. Yamagata handed her visitor the note with an air of amusement, only saying, "Matters have simply raced along, have they not?" and then prepared herself to listen to Madame's surprise.

The letter only took a few minutes to read:

"Shira Hata.

„Monday afternoon.

"Dearest Mrs. Yamagata,

"I do not know how to explain myself, so I will not attempt to do so, but only say I was married to the Marquis Karashi this morning, in the Shinto Chapel of Shira Hata. O'Chiyé-San was there. I feel I cannot sufficiently apologise for leaving your house so abruptly.

"I am sending for my maid and boxes, and if you can send me a kind message by her, you will everlastingly oblige your very apologetic and penitent

"Yone Karashi."

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"Well?" said Mrs. Yamagata, expectantly.

Madame d'Yseulte folded up the letter and replaced it in the envelope.

"It is sudden," she said, "but I thought it possible something of the kind would occur."

"And why?" said Mrs. Yamagata. "If she wished to marry the Marquis, why could it not be arranged in a proper manner?"

"Perhaps much trouble may have been prevented by the very suddenness of the marriage," said Madame; "but it is of course a remarkable thing for O'Yone-San to do!"

"Remarkable! I should think so, indeed!" said the other lady, indignantly, "to leave my house in this manner!"

"She had got herself into difficulties," said Madame, with an air of mystery, "I knew it, never mind how! Tell me, dear friend, where is your son? Does he know of this?"

"He knew it early this morning," said Mrs. Yamagata.

"And what," said Madame, breathlessly, "what did he do?"

"Nothing, that I know of, in reference to Yone Iyeyasu," returned Mrs. Yamagata, rather indignantly; "but he has just left here for Hakodate, to go to the Kiri country for bear-hunting."

"Ah!" cried Madame d'Yseulte, triumphantly, "believe me, dear friend, this marriage is for the best; you would not have wished him to marry Yone Iyeyasu, charming as she is."

"I did not know there was any question of his marrying her or anyone," said Mrs. Yamagata proudly, determined not to betray her son.

"Ah, no!" said Madame, "of course, all that is understood; but we are old friends, we understand each other. I think we may be sufficiently frank to admit that there is

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some cause to be grateful to the adventurous Yone—she has saved an unpleasant situation.”

“Perhaps so,” sighed Mrs. Yamagata, “but I cannot forgive her for making my boy suffer.”

“That is but natural,” said Madame d’Yseulte, consolingly; “we all feel most for our own.” Then she began to laugh.

“Meanwhile our friend Yone is Marchioness Karashi, and a much greater lady than either you or I! Tiens! it is clever!”

“I should not call O’Yone-San clever,” said Mrs. Yamagata rather shortly, “she always seemed to me so dependent on other people. I do not fancy she has arranged this herself.”

“Perhaps not,” agreed Madame, who felt she had had a large hand in starting events herself, by her conversation with the Marquis, at the Summer Palace.

"You will write to her?" she continued.

"I suppose I must," said Mrs. Yamagata, grudgingly, "just a few lines, but I confess I do not feel friendly." She rang the bell and desired the Viscountess Iyeyasu's maid to be sent to her.

Margaret came at once: she was in the middle of packing the boxes. Her mistress's note had simply stated the fact of the marriage and told her to come to Shira Hata at once in the ricksha sent for her; money was also enclosed, to be given to the house-keeper at Okodara, for the servants there.

Margaret was thoroughly astonished and rather angry; she thought she ought to have been confided in—before the event instead of after.

"Long as I've been with the Viscountess, to be treated like this!" she said to herself, indignantly. The ricksha-men from Shira Hata had told the news in the servants' quarter and it had quickly spread over the

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house, for Japanese servants are great gossips. The housekeeper came to find Margaret to enquire if the report were true, and to find out all about it.

"Yes, it's true enough," Margaret, who spoke Japanese well, said to her shortly. "The Marquis Karashi married my mistress to-day sure enough, but more than that I cannot tell you, and here are thirty yen to be given you for the servants here, sent in my mistress's letter."

"Very handsome, indeed," said the Japanese housekeeper, solemnly. "O'Yone-San is a lady of the most high and honoured family of Hayashi, who were ever liberal. But why was there such haste about the wedding, O'Margaret-San? Why not have had a grand affair, which is but due to the station of the Marquis?"

"That I can't tell you," said Margaret, but with an air of a person who could have said a great deal more if she liked and which

made it difficult for the housekeeper to believe her.

"You may believe me or not, as you please, but I know no more of this business than an unhatched chicken—waiting in its egg," continued Margaret, stolidly.

"Is that so in truth, O'Margaret-San?" said the housekeeper, deeply interested, and settling herself down for a good talk; "and I would not have thought she was of that secret nature! Always open and most pleasant was the honourable O'Yone-San."

Margaret grunted.

Here the worthy housekeeper's reflections were interrupted by the appearance of Mrs. Yamagata's woman, who came to summon Margaret to the room of the mistress of the house.

"You may find yourself truly in difficult places," sighed the housekeeper, with deep envy.

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Margaret knocked at the door of the boudoir and was told to come in.

"This is curious news, Margaret!" said Mrs. Yamagata, when the maid had entered the room and shut the door.

"It is indeed, ma'am," said Margaret, primly.

"Did the Viscountess Iyeyasu tell you she was going to be married to-day?" said Mrs. Yamagata, bluntly.

"My mistress told me this morning ma'am, that she was going to spend the day at Shira Hata," said Margaret. "I heard of no other arrangement."

She was evidently speaking the truth, as both ladies saw. Madame d'Yseulte was still in the boudoir.

"You are going now to Shira Hata, I presume?" said Mrs. Yamagata, after a slight pause.

"I was just packing the boxes, ma'am," said Margaret. "I will be starting in about half-an-hour."

"Please give the Marchioness this note from me," said Mrs. Yamagata, rather stiffly. "I sincerely trust she will be happy in her new life."

"Give her also my best wishes," said Madame d'Yseulte, nodding and smiling.

"I will, ma'am," said Margaret, severely.

"You must be much occupied, so we will not detain you longer," said Mrs. Yamagata, kindly. "Be sure you have your tea before you leave."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Margaret, as she curtseyed in an old-fashioned manner and withdrew.

"A most excellent, well-mannered person," remarked Mrs. Yamagata.

Madame d'Yseulte smiled.

"I fancy the estimable Margaret could betray some important secrets if she chose to do so," she said.

"She will say nothing, of course," said Mrs. Yamagata, impatiently.

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"No," said Madame, "of course not; she is a wise woman."

Downstairs, at tea in the hall, the news was being openly discussed. Miss Julia Conyngsby sat aghast!

The Marquis Karashi married! Aoki Yamagata gone to the Northern Island! Last, but not least, Captain Clarke openly devoted to the second Bentinck. It was time for Julia to flit! She would be receiving a pressing letter from the banker of Tokio the very next day! There was no use in frittering away her valuable time at Okodara.

Santo Munékito expressed his surprise in unmeasured language. He evidently thought O'Yone-San ought to have preferred someone livelier than the Marquis!

The other men said very little. Aoki Yamagata was a friend of theirs. All the house-party were surprised at the suddenness of the whole thing, but otherwise quite unconcerned.

"Yone Iyeyasu is a person of undoubted family herself, you say?" said Mrs. Bentinck, to Madame d'Yseulte, who had communicated the startling news. "Ah, yes, a daughter of Baron Hayashi—nothing could be more suitable than the marriage in every way! but I cannot understand the reason for such extreme haste."

"Perhaps the Marquis thought he had better get hold of O'Yone-San as quick as he could," said Niko, irreverently, in Japanese. "I'd have done the same, I know, if I only had the chance."

Everybody laughed.

"So Niko means to follow Marquis Karashi's example when he's grown up," said Clara Bentinck, in English. She understood Japanese, but could not talk it. "Won't you give even the smallest notice beforehand, Niko dear? Think of the broken hearts you may scatter around."

But Niko was offended at being laughed at.

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"O'Yone-San is worth any number of other people's broken hearts," he said grandly. "I think the Marquis is a most wise man," he added, stoutly.

"Hear, hear!" said Santo Munékito.

"It's a very scandalous way of getting married all the same," said Julia Conynsby, acidly. "I should be sorry to do such a thing. I imagine the Empress will hesitate about receiving her."

"Not she!" said old Mr. Yamagata, with a chuckle of derision. "Marquis Karashi is great enough to marry in what way pleases him best. Besides who could possibly object to the daughter of an ambassador?"

"Far from people objecting to her," put in Madame d'Yseulte, "I foresee a great social success for the young Marchioness Karashi."

"Not so young!" said Julia Conynsby, with evident ill-humour, and quitting for the time her innocently-childish rôle.

But this remark met the approval of no one in the Hall, O'Yone-San was too great a favourite with them all. Miss Conyngsby found herself unmistakably "shunted" in the succeeding conversation and Niko Yamagata designated her in an aside to his friend Santo, "an evil-speaking barbarian."

CHAPTER XIII

FOR GOOD AND ALL

"O'Yone-San saw nothing of her maid till she came to her own room to dress for dinner, at seven o'clock.

"You have arrived, then, Margaret?" she said nervously, stating a self-evident fact.

"Yes, ma'am—my lady, I should say," answered Margaret, with an expression of severe disapproval. "Here is a letter, my lady, that Mrs. Yamagata asked me to give you."

Yone looked pale and tired; she took the note carelessly, and read it through.

"Did you see Captain Yamagata, Margaret?" she asked, anxiously.

"I saw him in the morning, my lady, when I gave him your letter."

O'Yone-San stamped her foot impatiently. Was every word of what she wanted to know to be simply dragged out of Margaret? Where was Aoki? What had he done all day? But she only said aloud:—

“Did he give you no message for me?”

“No, my lady,” said Margaret, and then she suddenly became more communicative. “Captain Yamagata is gone away to Hakodate, and does not return for some time.”

“Hakodate?” said Yone, in surprise.

“So the man who packed his things said in the housekeeper's room, my lady,” said Margaret, stolidly. “What dress will you wear to night, my lady?”

“I don't care,” said O'Yone-San, wearily. But Margaret had a sense of fitness. She took out a soft white silk-gauze dress very bridal in its effect, and laid it on the bed.

Yone commenced dressing, without re-

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mark. Evidently she would hear no more of Aoki, unless she confided in Margaret.

"You know, Margaret, she said at last, in a hesitating voice, "Captain Yamagata wanted to marry me."

"So I supposed, ma'am," said Margaret, stiffly.

"But he is a boy, Margaret," cried Yone, in a trembling voice. "Count Ito would not have heard of such a thing!"

"So you married the Marquis to escape Captain Yamataga, ma'am?" said Margaret, in an interested manner.

"I suppose so," said her mistress, miserably. "I hate marrying anybody, Margaret, I hate it! It was much nicer being Yone Iyeyasu."

Margaret said nothing, but her face softened. She had not lived so many years with her inconsequent mistress without developing a strong affection for and interest in her.

Yone continued anxiously :—

“ Captain Yamagata was quite well when he left Okodara, I suppose ? ”

“ As far as I know, he was, ma'am,” said Margaret.

“ How could he go straight to Hakodate without any preparation ? ” said O'Yone-San.

“ He was going to Tokio to-night, ma'am,” said Margaret ; “ that's all I know.”

“ He was not ill, was he ? ” cried Yone, in desperation. “ Oh, Margaret, can't you see how miserable I am ? I am dying to know how he looked ! ”

“ The Captain was quite well, so far as I know, ma'am,” said Margaret. “ He spoke very short to me when he read your note, but I heard no remarks passed on him in the housekeeper's room, so he must have looked as usual when he went away. What's the good of worrying about Captain Yamagata now, ma'am ? ” said Margaret, impatiently. “ Marchioness Karashi you

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are and Marchioness Karashi you'll have to remain! Would you kindly sit down, my lady, and let me do your hair?"

O'Yone-San sat down in front of the dressing-table, and looked disgustedly at the bride-like figure reflected in the mirror.

"Poor, dear Aoki!" she murmured, half-audibly.

"You're just like a bee, ma'am," said Margaret, sentimentally, brushing her hair. "A bee as chops an' changes from one flower to another, and then a man comes by with a tumbler, and pops him in. Shira Hata's your tumbler, ma'am."

But O'Yone-San made no answer to this flight of fancy; she said impatiently—

"Are you sure Captain Yamagata was only going to Tokio to-night!"

"I'm sure of nothing, ma'am," replied Margaret, cautiously, "but the footman said his luggage was labelled at Kodzu for Tokio."

O'Yone-San stood up, her white dress falling softly round her, her blue eyes on fire.

"Let us escape from here, Margaret, while we can," she cried, feverishly—"now, before dinner! I can't stay—I must get away."

"Whatever are you talking of, my lady?" said Margaret, astounded.

But O'Yone-San seized her arm, passionately.

"Help me to go, Margaret—away—out of this house! It suffocates me! Help me to go, and there is nothing—nothing—I will not give you! Help me, Margaret," she cried, her eyes like wet violets, misty with tears. "Only help me to get out of this house!"

"Certainly not, my lady!" said Margaret, with great severity. "I would never lend my countenance to such doings"

"Are you ready for dinner, O'Yone?" said the Marquis's voice at the door.

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"O'Yone-San sat down on a chair by the dressing-table, and covered her eyes with her hand.

"Don't break down, ma'am, don't," said Margaret, in a low voice, reverting to her more familiar form of address, "remember the scandal it would make, and how Count Ito hates scandal—"

The Marquis knocked again impatiently, and Margaret went to the door.

"Her ladyship will be ready in a few minutes, honoured sir," she said, "will you wait in the boudoir?" She came out into the passage and opened the door of the boudoir for him, and ushered him in—then she returned to the bedroom.

O'Yone-San tried to get up as Margaret came up to her, and then sank down again on her chair.

"I really am ill, Margaret," she faltered. "I can't see, my sight is all wrong, and

everything shakes about—I can hardly see you.” She was nearly crying.

“You are only giddy, ma’am,” said Margaret, “and no wonder, after all you’ve done to-day, getting up so early and all. You must lie down on your bed as flat as possible, and it will soon go off.”

“I don’t know,” said O’Yone-San, frightened. “Oh, Margaret, I am so nervous about my sight when it goes like this. I believe it’s getting worse.”

“Nonsense, ma’am,” said Margaret, decidedly, “you just lie down quietly and it will soon go off—you know the doctor said it was only nerves, and would come on if you were overdone, or had a chill. I daresay you got a chill driving out so early this morning.”

She settled her mistress on her bed, and steeped a handkerchief in eau-de-cologne and placed it on her face. O’Yone-San took it from her impatiently.

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"Go, don't speak to me," she said, "I will get all right if you leave me quite quiet."

Margaret went away softly to the boudoir where the Marquis was pacing impatiently up and down.

He looked up as the door opened.

"Here you are at last, O'Yone!" he said—and stopped. "Why, Margaret, what is it?" he added anxiously, as he noticed her expression; "nothing is wrong with your mistress, surely?"

"I am afraid her ladyship is not very well, Sir," said Margaret, who never knew how to address a Japanese nobleman. "She must rest quiet for a short time, she is feeling rather giddy and faint."

But the Marquis hardly listened to her—he was already at the bedroom door, which Margaret had left open.

"May I come in, O'Yone?" he said, his heart in his voice.

"Yes, yes, Karashi, come here," cried she, nervously. "I am so frightened—I feel so funny, do stay by me, Karashi." When she felt ill, she forgot all minor difficulties in anxiety for her health.

The Marquis glared at the unoffending Margaret, as if she were responsible in some way, and strode up to the bed where Yone lay, with anxious, frightened eyes, looking at him imploringly.

"What is it, my darling?" he said. "We will send for the doctor at once."

"No, no," murmured Yone, "I'm only giddy and shaky. Don't talk, Karashi, but stay there and hold my hand."

"Yes, Sir," said Margaret, "if you sit quiet, her ladyship will soon be better. She often gets these attacks when she is upset by anything—no doctor is necessary."

Margaret discreetly went away to the next room.

Yone lay there, clasping her husband's

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hand feverishly, and feeling better for the great affection so close to her. The Marquis sat perfectly still, much flattered by her clinging to him, and putting her illness down to very natural and womanish nervousness. What charming sensibility Yone had, so different to the impassivity of a pure Japanese! And indeed: it was fortunate he was satisfied.

CHAPTER XIV

A YEAR LATER

It was in the middle of May, in London, and in one of the most sunny houses in Grosvenor Square, taken by the Japanese ambassador, Marquis Karashi.

O'Yone-San and her son, Count Ito Iyeyasu, were having breakfast together. Yone looked prettier than ever—there was very little Japanese in her appearance. It was difficult to believe her the mother of Count Ito, who bore little trace of his Scotch ancestors. He was a well-mannered boy of sixteen, and having always been accustomed to talk English with his mother, he spoke it perfectly, without a foreign accent of any kind. He liked England and English ways though he was, like all Japanese, very proud

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of his own country.

"Where's His Excellency?" he said now, helping himself to savoury omelette.

"He breakfasted hours ago," said Yone, smiling, "and then went for a ride in the Park. You are too lazy, Ito."

"The day is long enough," said Ito Iyeyasu, calmly. "I am going to ride down to Ranelagh to lunch—so I shall have enough exercise."

"I met Aoki Yamagata shortly before I left Japan," he said, a few minutes later. "He's not improved lately at all."

"How? In what way do you mean?" inquired O'Yone-San, eagerly.

"Oh, I don't know," said Count Ito, carelessly; "he is depressed and solemn—quite different to what he used to be. He desired to be remembered to you."

The Marchioness Karashi was silent and thoughtful. How badly she had treated Aoki Yamagata!—and yet—and yet—

What was done could not be undone.

Nor did she wish it undone.

Her present life suited her exactly, but but more than a shadow of regret crossed her mind for the pleasant past days in the pine-woods above Lake Hakoné, by the rushing waters of the Hayagawa, in the shadow of Fuji.

THE END.

SECOND IMPRESSION

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